

**DISCOURSES OF AFFECT IN
THE 1930S
HOLLYWOOD HORROR FILM CYCLE
AND IN ITS AFTERMATH
TO 1943**

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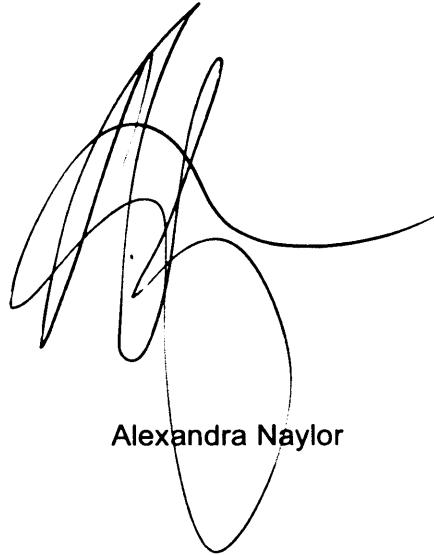
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A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Alexandra Naylor

Abstract

My PhD is a study of discourses of affect in the 1930s Hollywood horror cycle, which ran from 1931 to 1936, and the aftermath and conclusion of disputes related to such discourses which played out in the period from 1936 to 1943. I engage in a historicist study which examines the cycle's the production, censorship and reception context in order to consider the role played by various discourses of affect in the cycle's development, and the controversy surrounding it.

I examine in particular how the wider cinema censorship crisis of the 1930s played into the cycle, concentrating on case studies rather than broader overviews in order to draw out the disputes and competing discourses regarding horror's affects, pleasures and alleged negative effects which were at stake in the marketing, reception and censorship of horror films. Discussion of horror's affect was pursued from two different poles of interest, by those sites wishing to analyse it as a cinematic pleasure in order to reproduce it, and those wishing to isolate it as an undesirable quality in order to moderate or even excise it from cinema.

My thesis intervenes in debates in several specific fields: genre studies, 1930s horror histories, and censorship scholarship. My work has been informed by the recent genre studies work of Rick Altman and others, and I aim to offer a contribution to this strand of scholarship by analysing the effect of censorship and media controversy upon genre-making in the case of 1930s horror. I also argue that existing histories of the 1930s cycle can be substantially modified by the application of recent work in both genre studies and censorship studies. My archival investigation has also led me to a number of historical observations which challenge existing scholarship, which I call attention to during the course of the thesis.

Table of Contents

Title page	1
Declaration	2
Abstract	3
Table of Contents	4
Acknowledgements	5
Introduction	6
Chapter One: Review of literature	48
Chapter Two: "The real emotional horror kick": how horror emerged as a generic category in 1931	89
Chapter Three: "Too terrible to tell! You must SEE it!": the Role of Controversy and Censorship in the developing horror cycle	121
Chapter Four: "Emotional possession": how did the Production Code Administration develop an effective censorship model of horror?	155
Chapter Five: "Less Phantom and More Opera": transformations of horror and its censorship, 1938-1943	197
Conclusion	227
Notes	229
Filmography	248
Bibliography	251

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Introduction

0.1 The aims of this thesis

Matt Hills has cogently argued, in his recent book *The Pleasures of Horror* (2005) that in the case of horror films, as elsewhere, there is no pleasure without discourse. This is to say that we have no access to the non-discursive affect of horror, that which is felt; as soon as it is discussed, it is shaped into discourse. Therefore, horror's horror, the affect itself, so frequently taken by both fans and scholars to be one of the central pleasures, although by no means the only pleasure, of the genre, is unavailable to those who seek it. Where does this leave horror scholars, then? One route, my own, is to examine instead what Hills refers to as "discourses of affect": their construction, their disputes, and the different interests in horror which guide those who produce them.¹

This is not a study of what the audiences of 1930s horror films did, or how they responded emotionally. Instead it is an examination of what various bodies with interests in the film industry believed and claimed about their responses. In it I focus on how marketing invited audiences to respond affectively to horror, of how the trade press constructed the affective pleasures audiences took in horror films, of how censorship campaigners understood the negative psychological effects which they believed horror could produce, and what Hollywood's internal censors believed about campaigners' objections to horror. It should be noted that Hills sometimes uses the term affect in a very specific sense, as a particular construction of emotive response to films which he opposes to the cognitive construct of object-derived, cognition-based "emotion".² However, I use the term affect in the broader sense Hills also relies upon; in its sense as meaning emotional response, in this case to a film.

My central question is this: how did discourses of affect shape the 1930s horror cycle's generic development, its controversy throughout its run, and its broader relationship with the 1930s cinema censorship crisis?

My thesis begins with the premise that film cycles (and more broadly, film genre) in the classical Hollywood studio system are constituted through a critical dialogue between different discursive sources: producers, directors and other filmmakers, studios, trade

press, mainstream press, exhibitors, spectators and internal, independent and local censorship bodies. This is a process which has been previously noted and mapped to some degree by modern genre scholars, particularly Rick Altman and Steve Neale, as I will elaborate in Chapter One. Like these scholars, I believe that both these various kinds of critical and promotion material and films themselves can be regarded as active contributions to the ongoing discussions which constantly define and redefine generic terms. My thesis argues that this critical dialogue among and between the aforementioned sites was *the central channel through which horror's generic development was mediated*.

These different sites of discussion, despite their shared interest in analysing and discussing the cycle chiefly through questions of affect, are characterised by great disagreement and variety in their discursive models of that affect; of where one might find it and how it works.

For example, nearly all these sites tend to disagree on where they locate the generation of horror affect. State censor boards tended to treat it primarily as a spectacle or an object within the film. According to the trade press and to *Variety* in particular, that spectacle's narrative and formal context was a more crucial factor. Numerous articles in the mainstream press linked the fashion for horror with the Depression, treating cinematic affect as the product of the extra-cinematic cultural context which spectators brought to the cinema with them. Independent censorship campaigns even frequently claimed that grotesque affect's success sprung from the private neuroses of particular kinds of susceptible, "morbid" spectator, where the healthy person would be both unaffected by horror and uninterested in the experiences it had to offer.

The participants in discussions about 1930s horror sought to analyse what it did and how it worked for their own specific reasons. Censorship campaigners might be seeking to catalogue the sensations horror evoked in spectators and the negative psychological aftereffects of those sensations, in order to articulate why such films were undesirable. A Hollywood trade newspaper like *Variety*, on the other hand, might analyse a film's form, evaluate its affective success, and comment on the continued viability of the horror cycle, for an industry readership interested in the profitability of individual films and the progress of cycles. Both these participants, the censorship campaigner and the trade newspaper, had an interest in the future of horror and analysed recent films in order to

suggest how their example might be followed or avoided. Such commentators mould their discussion to the imitative, trend-based rhythms of the film cycle system.

Horror's controversy was a crucial factor in contemporary discussions of the cycle. From the cycle's beginnings, horror was attractive to some spectators and groups and intensely repulsive, even unacceptable to others. The genrification of horror's affect as the cycle's supposed pre-eminent source of appeal served to feed this controversy, which therefore became a crucial part of the critical dialogue through which horror developed. Discussion of horror's affect, therefore, was pursued from two different poles of interest, by those sites wishing to analyse it as a cinematic pleasure in order to reproduce it, and those wishing to isolate it as an undesirable quality in order to moderate or even excise it from cinema.

In the critical dialogue concerning horror, all players were not equal. The power relations which affected film production, distribution and spectatorship in the real world affected which voices were most influential concerning horror. In particular, the internal censorship of the Studio Relations Committee and its successor, the Production Code Administration had a progressively greater influence upon the cycle. I contend that this growth of influence was bound up with its progressively more complex analyses of horror affect, and particularly the PCA's negotiation of the slippage between notions of gruesomeness as a visual and aural instance, and as horror as an affective process.

Horror studies is a broad and growing field. My thesis intersects with several key debates: historical narratives of the 1930s cycle, theoretical, historical and methodological issues connected with genre studies and how horror itself is defined, and discussion of horror's affect and reception, and the place of ambivalence and controversy in these. I discuss my interventions in each of these key areas, and the contributions I hope to make, more fully in Chapter One of this thesis. Here I wish to sketch the key contributions I believe this thesis makes in each of these fields.

Despite the rise of industrial-historical approaches to studying horror and other genres, there is still very little horror scholarship which considers horror in the light of recent developments in genre studies, and does not take the category of *horror itself* as somehow already defined. My thesis argues for greater attention to horror's definition as

an ongoing process: to questions of discourse, and to the constant development of and dispute over this process.

This thesis aims to contribute to the broader fields of study with which it intersects in several chief ways. Firstly, I aim to contribute to the useful programme of genre scholarship instituted by Rick Altman and others by offering a case study which considers a somewhat neglected player in the classical Hollywood genre game: censorship. Secondly, my thesis challenges existing narratives of the 1930s horror cycle, especially in its assimilation of recent developments in the study of censorship, in the various specific historical claims my archival research has led me to, and in my focus on the specific workings of historical disputes and discursive struggles between different bodies, rather than on a broad 'top-down' historical overview.

Many of the specific historical contentions I advance in this thesis are either original, interventions into neglected areas or substantial complications of existing historical narratives. I consider the internal censorship of the Production Code Administration and the independent censorship campaign as having fundamentally different interests in cinema which shaped the way they constructed horror as a censorship problem, and the disputes between these discursive models which ensued. I argue that the Production Code Administration, not the pressure of external censors and the British Board of Film Classification, was directly responsible for the end of the horror cycle in 1936. I consider the end of the horror cycle, the hiatus in production from 1936 to 1938, and horror's resurgence from 1939 to 1941, in much more detail than most scholars, and argue that these periods were the site of very important generic and discursive developments around horror.

Moreover, I intervene in an established horror studies debate, whether horror as a film genre can be taken to originate in 1931 or in the 1920s, and offer a much fuller proof than I believe has so far been attempted that it did, indeed, begin in 1931. My thesis also offers several smaller contributions to horror's history of ideas, by noting that several prominent tropes and narratives common to academic horror criticism and discussions around horror censorship began in 1930s discussion of the cycle in the censorship debate, the American trade press, and the wider media. These include the notion that horror crazes are the product of moments of cultural upheaval and anxiety like the

Depression, and that of horror's market being dominated by a group of 'fan' repeat consumers.

My thesis is theoretically aligned with the industrial-historical work on genre studies done by Altman, Neale and Naremore in the last decade. For its historical narrative of classical Hollywood and the 1930s, it relies upon Balio and Altman in particular. For its understanding of historical censorship issues and the Production Code, it draws on the work of Jacobs, Vasey and Maltby, and the study *Children, Cinema and Censorship*.

My research question was a historical one and during research and writing, I found that an industrial-historical method was that which provided the fullest and most satisfactory answers to my research question. The more theoretical approach I originally considered was gradually edged out by my analysis of archival sources.

I defined and limited my field of analysis in three ways. Firstly, topically: I examine the horror cycle rather than looking at how discourses of affect might have played into other kinds of controversial film of the period, such as the gangster cycle or the 'kept woman' cycle.

Second, I defined my scope historically. My main focus is on the 1931-1936 horror film cycle, a relatively discrete production trend which, as I will argue in Chapters One and Two, originated the generic term horror in 1931, and which was followed by a clear hiatus in horror production between 1936 and 1938. I go beyond these limits only twice, both times in order to understand better the development and conditions of the 1931 to 1936 cycle. In Chapter Two I engage in a short discussion of 1920s mystery thrillers, in order to argue for my position that these films were not produced or marketed as horror, but also to investigate some non-generic descriptive uses of the word horror in criticism of these films. The negative connotations of these 1920s critical uses, I argue, haunt the first uses of horror as a generic term in 1931. In Chapter Five, I also go beyond my main period of focus to the period 1939 to 1943, in order to examine the close and transformation of the controversy and censorship disputes that characterised 1930s horror.

Third, my study had some limits of scope related to my methodology. I chose a focus for my investigation which meant relying on archival sources, which are limited and in some

cases incomplete. The Production Code Administration's censorship case files for two major horror films, *Freaks* and *King Kong*, are unavailable, which has regrettably limited the amount of attention I have been able to devote to these films.

0.2 The structure of this thesis

So far I have outlined my premises and most major contentions in this thesis, as well as given a broad summary of the historical facts with which its investigation begins. Next, I will offer a brief description of the work of the rest of this introduction, and of the thesis itself chapter by chapter.

0.2.1 Chapter One

Chapter One locates my study within the broader scholarly context, and more specifically aims to argue for the specific positions I adopt in my work regarding various key debates in a number of fields with which my work directly intersects. In some cases, it argues that this thesis can challenge or supplement existing work on the subject, and in others, that it can offer narratives of neglected areas of study around the 1930s horror cycle and around horror between 1939 and 1942.

After offering a very brief history of horror studies primarily intended to locate my work, and the areas I discuss in more detail, within the field, I move on to a discussion relating to recent developments in genre studies. I argue that the recent work of Rick Altman, Steve Neale, and James Naremore have effectively challenged the prior methods and terms which genre scholars use to analyse and discuss their subject, particularly with reference to classical Hollywood. However, while some recent work within horror studies has directly engaged with the challenges offered by these scholars, existing studies of the 1930s horror cycle, with the partial exception of Rhona Berenstein's work, have not yet done so. I aim in this thesis to offer a discussion of the 1930s cycle informed by these developments, and by Altman's work in particular. I also argue here that in some respects my work hopes to supplement Altman's analysis of the process of 'genrification'

by considering, via the case study of the 1930s horror cycle, the effect of censorship and other kinds of controversy upon the genre-making process.

This chapter then discusses some specific issues of historiography. The first is the methodological choice of perspective from which to approach explanation of the 1930s horror cycle, which I characterise here as being between 'top-down' or 'bottom-up' modes of explanation. I discuss the frequency of the former mode of explanation, which tends to see the cycle as a logical consequence or cultural outgrowth of the Depression, in accounts of 1930s horror. I argue that while such explanations have definite advantages and uses, many of them tend to elide or obscure specific disputes or struggles for power, especially related to the controversy and censorship issues surrounding the cycle. Therefore, my account aims in the main to offer a more microhistorical approach which focuses attention upon these relatively neglected disputes. This said, it remains informed by broader historical perspectives and the significant influences of broader cultural, social and economic change and struggle in the cycle's history.

This chapter then discusses two other historiographic issues, the relationship of horror studies with censorship studies, and the definition of the cycle's historical parameters. Regarding the former issue, I argue that existing work on the 1930s horror cycle, again, with the partial exception of Rhona Berenstein's work, does not take into account recent developments in 1930s censorship history. My work aims to address this issue by offering such an account. Regarding the cycle's historical parameters, I focus on how scholars define the beginning of the horror cycle, and the genre category of horror in general, and argue that issues of methodology and genre definition are at the heart of the ongoing scholarly dispute over whether horror emerged as a genre category in 1931, which I argue it did.

Finally, I discuss critical models of horror affect and spectatorship, issues crucial to my thesis. I argue for a divide between theoretical studies of horror affect and more empirical studies of spectatorship, the latter largely recent. I argue that, in the particular case of the 1930s horror cycle, Matt Hills' recent and useful delineation of the role of "discourses of affect" in horror spectatorship and criticism can offer a way of discussing disputes between different discourses about horror spectatorship and affect, without obscuring them via a broader theoretical model.

0.2.2 Chapter Two

In this chapter I discuss the development of horror as a new genre term as it emerged during 1931 in the marketing and trade press discussion of *Dracula*, *Frankenstein* and the incipient horror cycle. I argue that this genrification took place via developing discourses of horror affect with particular purposes. Marketing for *Dracula* was strategically vague and stressed its uniqueness, but marketing for *Frankenstein*, which lays far more emphasis on developed notions of horror as an affective experience, appears to pick up on a developing discourse surrounding *Dracula* which can be observed in its trade press reception. This discourse focused on the management of an “emotional horror kick” that *Variety* among others located as responsible for the film’s success.

While the trade press focused largely on the management and moderation of this “emotional horror kick” via tempo, set design and various other elements of film form, marketing from *Frankenstein* on stressed the extremity of the experience the film offered spectators. Marketing dared consumers to see the film, and promised it would offer them as much horror as they could stand.

Both articles from studio marketing and reports within the trade press allude to the riskiness of the incipient horror cycle, the danger that the dynamic of attraction and repulsion they saw at work in the “emotional horror kick” might tip over into outright repulsion and consumer rejection of horror films.

One particular *Variety* article, from April 1931, suggests that Universal’s risky investment in the horror cycle might have a precedent in their two Lon Chaney melodrama spectacles, *Phantom of the Opera* and *Hunchback of Notre Dame*. As I argue in Chapter One, Chaney’s films, including these, were *not* produced and consumed as horror. Yet marketing of *Dracula* and *Frankenstein* also makes persistent links with these films and Chaney in general, despite emphatically asserting elsewhere that horror was generically new.

My research has shown that these allusions appear to be to repeated negative criticism of Lon Chaney's films in the trade and mainstream press on the grounds of their "horror" and "morbidity". Here, horror is crucially used in a non-generic sense as a description of a *problematic* and allegedly *unpleasurable* quality of these films.

I argue that in fact, the new, generic use of the word "horror" to describe the incipient horror cycle carried some negative baggage from these previous, non-generic uses. In fact, horror marketing attempted to directly address the prospect of a negative consumer reaction similar to that which criticism of Chaney's films had feared they would provoke.

The "dare" of horror marketing, a trend which persisted throughout the cycle, in particular aimed frankly to warn off those consumers likely to be offended, but to attract the large numbers of consumers who might conversed be tempted by a horror film. However, as I will discuss in more detail, this line of marketing also actively courted a degree of controversy and sensation, drawing real objections to horror and pulling the cycle into the orbit of the 1930s cinema and censorship crisis.

0.2.3 Chapter Three

At the end of my last chapter, I argued that horror marketing, and the audience appeal of horror affect as articulated by marketing and the trade press, was drawn by this discourse into a relationship with controversy.

In this chapter, I investigate the role of controversy and censorship, and particularly the role of the internal censorship of the Studio Relations Committee in the first three years of the horror cycle. I argue that it was very difficult to theorise audience pleasure based on ambivalence or "morbid curiosity" within the terms of the Production Code. The latter attempts to encompass all possible problematic content within the two, mutually exclusive categories of "the sin that attracts" and "the sin that repels", leaving little room for any audience reaction based upon a combination or dynamic of attraction and repulsion. However, horror marketing and press discourse constructed the horror cycle as offering just such an ambivalent pleasure to audiences.

While independent censorship campaigning and local censorship boards immediately objected strongly to *Dracula* and then to *Frankenstein* and to *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. However, the SRC, for the reasons I have outlined above, took some time to understand that the developing horror cycle constituted a censorship problem which fell under the remit of the Production Code.

The SRC feared that the horror cycle would increase in extremity and especially in visual “gruesomeness” as new films sought to court the market by outdoing previous films, until the cycle produced a major anti-cinema controversy. While the horror films of 1932 *do*, overall, show an increase in visual gruesomeness and decreased use of ellipsis and implication, this does not necessarily support the SRC’s understanding of horror’s trajectory. Firstly, as the trade press discourse I analysed in the last chapter suggests, not all sources understood increased “gruesomeness” as producing more intense or more effective horror films, and indeed sometimes understood the *opposite* to be the case. Secondly, the failure of *Freaks*, a 1932 big-budget MGM horror film which was rejected by audiences across the country, and remains controversial even today, lost the studio over a hundred thousand dollars, appears to have halted this trend towards increased visual gruesomeness, as horror films produced after its release show no further movement in this direction.

Instead horror films continue to favour the strategies of ellipsis and implication which the SRC had encouraged them to adopt. This was a common SRC policy for dealing with controversial material, which held that such “sophisticated” and “delicate” presentation of difficult content could stave off outside controversy. However, as we have seen from the trade press’s analysis of horror affect in Chapter Two, such strategies actually appear to be congruent with existing horror films’ techniques aimed at *eliciting* affective responses, not moderating them. The SRC’s policy discouraged further experiments with increased visual gruesomeness along the lines of *Freaks*, but in this it merely supported existing horror style, and indeed helped *conserve* the appeal of the cycle rather than shut it down – despite the fact that the SRC had early on expressed an ambition towards ending the cycle.

However, local censorship boards and independent campaigners continued to object strongly to horror films, and as the censorship crisis deepened, the SRC would have to

reformulate its understanding of horror as a censorship problem in order to be able to exert any control over these objections, and the cycle itself.

0.2.4 Chapter Four

In this chapter, I examine the development of discourses of horror censorship during the latter half of the horror cycle, from 1933 to 1936. When the Studio Relations Committee were reformed as the Production Code Administration in early 1934, although their censorship negotiations over script drafts were immediately more comprehensive, they remained based on the same understanding of “gruesomeness” as a censorship issue which had guided the SRC, and which I argued last chapter helped to conserve both the horror cycle and the controversy which attached to it.

However, a major shift took place in the PCA’s horror policy between 1934 and 1935, enabling them both to successfully anticipate most local censorship difficulties, and to actively work to discourage producers from making horror films. I argue that two main factors inform this change: the PCA’s censorship negotiations over two films during 1934, *The Black Cat* and *Bride of Frankenstein*, and the publication and widespread media discussion of the Payne Fund Studies.

In the case of *The Black Cat*, the PCA recommended that a problematic scene would be shot in silhouette, in line with existing SRC policies of rendering problematic or censorable events by implication and ellipsis. However, the scene as shot in silhouette was protested and cut by many censor boards, suggesting the inefficiency of this policy as a means of pre-empting the censorship difficulties of horror.

In the case of *Bride of Frankenstein*, the PCA were firmer about asking for the removal of elements in the script they felt would cause censorship difficulties, but the director opted to return problematic elements to the script in a less explicit, more suggestive form. The PCA failed to obtain all the deletions they asked for from the finished film, and many of the sequences of suggestive horror they singled out, but did not manage to excise, were heavily censored by local boards. This case nevertheless shows the PCA attempting to move towards an expansion of the category of censorable “gruesomeness” from visual and aural instances to suggested and elided events, and other elements of the film.

I also argue that the PCA's changed censorship policy of 1935 onwards is influenced by the media discussion around the Payne Fund Studies, a series of sociological and psychological studies of the effect of cinema viewing on children and adolescents, which was funded by a censorship pressure group and, at their behest, summarised in an emotive and polemical popular bestseller, *Our Movie Made Children*, which for offered a substantial chapter on the negative effects of horror spectatorship upon children. *Our Movie Made Children* integrated objections to horror into the broader social effects reasoning of the censorship campaign. Since the narrative of horror effects it offered encompassed the objections of a number of groups, and was compatible with the social effects model underlying the Code, the PCA was able to take advantage of it in order to iterate a firmer and more global stance upon the horror cycle.

The PCA's censorship negotiations over horror films from 1935 onwards show both stern attempts to deter studios from horror production, with reference to concern over social effects. They also display increasingly stringent demands which attempt to excise as much potentially horror content as possible, to shift the generic identity of films towards less problematic categories, and even to demonstrate by obstructive demands that horror production was more trouble than it was worth.

In 1936, despite a number of recent successful horror films, Universal took horror productions off its schedule, and other studios followed. Although many scholars argue that external censorship problems was largely responsible for the end of the horror cycle, I attribute it to direct pressure from the PCA on studios to end horror productions. Arguing this, I examine how the PCA deliberately overstated and misrepresented the complex British censorship situation in order to suggest to studios that the BBFC had instituted a 'ban' upon horror films. Many scholars, not having access to archival material on British censorship, have been unaware of this fact.

0.2.5 Chapter Five

In my fourth chapter, I conclude my analysis by examining the end of the cycle and the aftermath of the 1930s cycle, from 1938 into the 1940s. I examine the conclusion and transformation of the discursive relationship between horror, censorship and controversy,

and how this played into a re-evaluation of horror films' affective work, and the terms of its success and failure, by the trade and mainstream press, and ultimately how it also played into horror's generic fragmentation and mobilisation between 1939 and 1943.

In my discussion, I pursue two particular topics which I argue most scholars have tended to neglect. First, they have tended to concentrate analysis on the output of Universal and RKO's horror units from 1941 onwards, and thus largely to elide horror from 1936 to 1941. This means that there is almost no extant scholarship which discusses the horror production hiatus of 1936 to 1938, and on the terms on which this horror 'ban' ended, and relatively little on the films of 1939-1941. Second, most studies, concentrating on Universal and RKO's units, view either all 1940s horror or Universal's output as a declined version of 1930s horror. This neglects the diversity of 1940s horror production and frequently misrepresents Universal and the relationship of their film products to RKO's.

Following my discussion of the PCA's pressure on producers to end the cycle in 1936, I argue that the PCA were primarily responsible for maintaining the two year hiatus, dissuading producers on the grounds of the alleged 'British horror ban' and horror's wider controversy. Following a very successful revival of *Dracula* and *Frankenstein* as a double-bill, studio insistence put horror films back into production. However, at this point the 1930s cinema and censorship crisis had abated, and the PCA had become the primary site of film censorship in the USA. As new horror releases met with little controversy, the PCA scaled back their warnings and interventions into horror productions, and reworked their horror policy to argue once more for a moderation of visual gruesomeness, and also for films to play down horror in relation to other genre angles. However, reviews show that while the PCA achieved changes in content, this did not necessarily result in any perception of horror films as affectively milder or less intense.

The deflation of the controversy surrounding horror led to a shift in the terms in which the trade and mainstream press discussed horror affect. Positive reviews praised horror films for intensity more than moderation, and negative reviews tended to criticise films for failing to horrify, rather than for horrifying too much.

This trend co-incided with a sense of horror's generic standardisation, and a concomitant trend towards films which blended horror with other genres, resulting in multiple, differentiated horror cycles, including horror comedies and 'quality' prestige A pictures, as well as the competing programmer units of RKO and Universal.

0.3 A brief history of the 1930s horror cycle

As a number of modern classical Hollywood scholars like Tino Balio and Rick Altman have argued, the cycle was the chief means by which film genre was organised and developed in the classical Hollywood film industry. Many film cycles were sparked by one or two impressive box office successes. Follow-up films from the same studio or from others would attempt to repeat at least some of that success. This involved an attempt to judge and to replicate what might be the key elements of the original film's appeal. It also typically involved amplification, variation and twists which add novelty and give the follow-up films a degree of independent appeal. Some film cycles which emerged in the early 1930s included the hotel film (sparked by *Grand Hotel* (MGM, 1932, dir. Edmund Goulding)), the 'kept woman' or gold-digger cycle (popularised by *Red-Headed Woman* (MGM, 1932, dir. Jack Conway) and *Baby Face* (Warner, 1933, dir. Alfred E. Green)), radio station films, gangster films – and the horror cycle. Cycles were industrially useful ways of categorising film which helped with producing and marketing a varied spread of product, and helping to extract the maximum profit from a particular film's success. In the hostile economic climate of the Depression, film cycles arguably became a particularly important strategy.

Variety in 1932 reported a joke told by the director and writer Jack McDermott about film cycles, in which the painter James McNeill Whistler has a hypothetical run-in with contemporary studio executives:

'I want to paint an old lady sitting in a rocking chair. I was thinking of painting it against a greyish background.'

Executive number one: 'The public is sick to death of old women. No sex appeal anyway.'

'We've had six pictures in a row with grey background,' say executive number two. 'Next cycle will be blue background. So make it blue – and say, can't you have two old women?'

'Whistler wants to make any picture by now – he needs the cash,' describes McDermott. 'I was going to have her sitting in a rocking chair and call the picture 'Mother.'

'But rocking chairs are passé,' chimes in another exec. Put the two old dames in riding togs on a merry-go-round and call it 'Ex-Mother.'" ...³

Besides that much-mythologised confrontation between creative filmmaker and uncomprehending studio executive, this joke turns on the trade's demand for film cycles to combine novelty with repetition and amplification of established audience pleasures, and its anxious care to try to second-guess which novelties and pleasures the public would 'go for'. Cycles provided a way of anticipating the public's taste, and the trade press devoted much space to charting and guessing at their ebb and flow.

Many cycles only lasted a year or two – the horror film, as I will discuss later, was unusually durable. Cycles, as Tino Balio puts it, lasted "until either the producer ran out of fresh ideas to sustain product variation or until a flood of imitations hit the market. Usually, it was both."⁴ Rick Altman offers an alternative model, arguably more applicable to the five year long horror cycle and its 1940s successors, which he calls the "cycle-genre-cycle" process. He convincingly argues that a cycle whose success continued for long enough would be standardised into a more general genre. Since broader genres, for instance musicals or melodramas, did not alone allow studios to successfully distinguish their products or to capitalise on trends, the cycle which has become a genre will likely in new films have elements of novelty added, or be hybridised with other genres. If such experiments are successful, new cycles are born and the process begins again.⁵

At this early point of the thesis I want to offer a very brief introductory overview of the 1930s horror cycle's history, incorporating a short box office history. As well as introducing or reminding the reader of some of the key titles, studios, dates and trends under discussion, this is intended to help contextualise the other trends, controversies, discussions and events I discuss throughout the thesis without lengthy digressions at the time.

My own archival research has indicated that such generic terms as horror were, in the language of 1930s cinema production, trade press and marketing, pragmatic working descriptors rather than exclusive, completely coherent systematic categories. Films

could sometimes be part of more than one cycle, and promotional strategies often emphasised different aspects of a film depending on which market individual exhibitors were hoping to reach. This brief history therefore also draws attention to numerous films which were marketed both as horror cycle films and as occupying other generic categories, and films which were primarily identified with other categories by reviews but which exploited horror angles in marketing.

The 1930s horror cycle, and indeed, as I will discuss in Chapters One and Two, the film genre term “horror” itself, emerged in 1931 with the immense box-office popularity of *Dracula* (Universal, 1931, dir. Tod Browning), and two follow-ups later in the year, *Frankenstein* (Universal, 1931, dir. James Whale) and *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (Paramount, 1931, dir. Rouben Mamoulian). The horror cycle was associated most closely with Universal, but Paramount, Warner and MGM also contributed several films each to the cycle, and Fox contributed at least one, *Almost Married*. During its course, the cycle produced a number of major box-office hits, including *Dracula* and *Frankenstein*, the two films which ignited the cycle, *The Invisible Man* (Universal, 1933, dir. James Whale) and *Bride of Frankenstein* (Universal, 1935, dir. James Whale). It also had many more modest successes, securing over time increasing perception within the trade press of a reliable niche market made up of regular horror consumers or “chiller fans”, as I will further discuss below. The horror cycle ended in 1936, with a complete cessation of both horror film production and the marketing of horror angles, despite a number of profitable horror releases that year. In late 1938, horror reappeared on production schedules after a re-released double-bill of *Dracula* and *Frankenstein*. In 1939, the first new horror film for three years, *Son of Frankenstein*, opened what has often been called a new horror cycle but is, I argue, more accurately termed an explosion of generically varied and frequently hybrid cycles, sub-cycles and individual films. This effectively turned horror into a different kind of generic category, from a single cycle to a genre ‘ingredient’ mixed into a wide variety of films and trends, included some marketed towards the putative category of predictable regular horror consumers cited above.

Dracula, the film which sparked the horror cycle, was released in January 1931, just at the point that the major studios began to be substantially affected by the Depression. *Dracula*’s box-office success was widely and accurately regarded as having prevented the collapse of Universal that year. It was on the strength of its vast success that Universal and the other studios seized on horror as an attraction worth reproducing.

The film was planned as a prestige picture, a follow-up to Universal's biggest sound-era critical and commercial success, the 1930 war film *All Quiet on the Western Front*. The new studio head, Carl Laemmle Jr. (who had been given the studio as a twenty-first birthday gift from his father, Carl Laemmle Sr.) was upgrading Universal's output to compete in the first-run market. *All Quiet* was his biggest success so far.⁶ Universal obtained the rights to *Dracula* on 22nd August 1930. This purchase included a payment of about \$40, 000 to Bram Stoker's widow Florence, who owned the rights. It also included the rights to a theatrical adaptation currently a hit on Broadway, starring Bela Lugosi. This play, originally written by Hamilton Deane and produced in England, where it was a great hit, was subsequently adapted for Broadway by John Balderston. It notably moved the setting forward to 1930, and infused it with elements of the drawing-room mystery thriller.⁷

Universal designated *Dracula* as a "Universal Super Production", a production category which denoted a prestige picture, and assigned the Pulitzer-winning novelist Louis Bromfield to the screenplay. While Bromfield's first script directly adapted the novel, later drafts were, more pragmatically, based very closely on the currently successful play.⁸ However, as *Dracula* moved through its pre-production phase, the Depression was hitting Universal. As a smaller studio, Universal was affected more quickly than its larger competitors: in 1930, its losses totaled \$2.2 million. The studio was forced to make rapid cutbacks, and *Dracula* soon had its budget reduced to \$355, 050. While it was still one of the studio's most expensive pictures that year, this budget was now a fraction of what Universal had expended on *All Quiet on the Western Front*. *Dracula* was shot over six weeks, a relatively lengthy production period appropriate to its high budget, finishing on November 15th, 1930.⁹

It premiered at the Roxy Theatre, New York on Thursday 12th February, 1931, accompanied by a lurid publicity campaign: exploitation originally fixed the premiere as Friday 13th February, changing at the last minute after much publicity with a faked, heavily advertised telegram from a "superstitious" Tod Browning. In its eight-day run, the film grossed \$112,000. It went into national distribution in March, including a silent version for those small-town theatres not yet converted to sound. Its Los Angeles premiere was somewhat subdued, as by the time the film reached LA, Universal was in the midst of a work shutdown as an austerity measure, and thus the film was not

promoted in the local and trade press as it had been in New York. It opened at the Orpheum, a less prestigious downtown theatre, and received mixed reviews in the trade press, many of them commenting on its extremity and gruesomeness. However, *Dracula's* box office receipts did not suffer too much from this: its first domestic release grossed \$700,000 – nearly twice its investment. World receipts by 1936 would reach \$1,012,189.¹⁰ By the end of the fiscal year 1931, Universal was in profit (by \$400,000) for the first time in two years. Universal was the only studio to improve its fortunes in 1931.¹¹

Universal's Depression-era production regime involved a shift to relatively inexpensive production, and a greater reliance on genre and cycle, even at the feature level.¹²

Uncategorisable artistic statements like *All Quiet on the Western Front* could not be reproduced or reliably marketed in the way that cycle pictures could. In this environment, it was logical enough that two more horror films, *Frankenstein* and *Murders in the Rue Morgue*, were quickly put into production. *Frankenstein*, as well as the Mary Shelley novel, adapted a 1930 British play by Peggy Webling, author of the original, British version of the play *Dracula*. The American rights had been purchased by John Balderston and Horace Liveright, responsible for the Broadway *Dracula*, but it was never produced due to legal complications over the incipient film adaptation.¹³

One of the more neglected facts of the horror cycle is that *Dracula's* success resulted in more than one cycle. Warner and RKO commissioned their own studio-specific cycles, respectively two hypnotism-themed historical melodramas with John Barrymore, and a three-film series of jungle pictures, in an attempt to compete with the incipient horror cycle. I will discuss RKO's jungle cycle, *The Most Dangerous Game*, *King Kong*, and *Son of Kong*, in more detail below.

Warner's *Dracula* follow-ups, *Svengali* and *The Mad Genius*, both appeared before the success of *Frankenstein* and the upcoming releases of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* and *Murders in the Rue Morgue* really established the horror cycle. Contemporary marketing and reviews do not describe *Svengali* as horror, but suggest that it picked up on *other* aspects of *Dracula* – the hypnotist villain, the period setting and the adaptation of a popular and well-known late Victorian novel (although unlike *Dracula*, *Svengali* drew directly on its novel source rather than on a recent stage adaptation). *Variety's* review of *Svengali* describes it as a "costume picture", while the *New York Times'* review focuses on its adaptation of the source material, George Du Maurier's 1894 novel *Trilby*.

However, by the end of the cycle, *Svengali* seems to have been retrospectively recategorised as a horror film by at least some sources. A 1935 *Vanity Fair* cartoon depicting “the horror boys in Hollywood” includes John Barrymore as Svengali “acting carnal in a sinister way”.¹⁴ Such a reassessment is understandable given that the horror cycle had been a major trend lasting five years, while Warner’s two hypnotist *Dracula* follow-ups represented a comparatively short, and much less successful production trend.

The second film of the horror cycle released, *Frankenstein* proved as big a hit as *Dracula* throughout December 1931 and January 1932. New York reported that “‘Frankenstein’s \$50, 000 Will Establish New Mayfair [Picture House] Record”, and the house had “the biggest smash of its history”, had been “forced to extra shows”, and was “selling tickets at 2 a.m.” Columbus, Ohio noted that “it takes the weird and gruesome to call the cops. ‘Frankenstein’ is doing it at the Palace.” At the State Lake Theatre, Chicago, *Variety*’s reporter noted that “the thriller will touch close to \$40, 000, a remarkable figure at this weak-kneed house.”¹⁵ In Pittsburgh, the Stanley Theatre, showing *Frankenstein*, “had standees all Saturday ... Everything else is off as a result of the Stanley trade ... Horror film topping everything in sight.”¹⁶ *Frankenstein* ran for an impressive three weeks at many houses, and broke Depression-era attendance records in many places. Newark reported that “Sensational business marks the opening of ‘Frankenstein at Proctor’s. The crowd Saturday afternoon smashed glass doors, the brass stanchions, and things in general.”¹⁷ *Frankenstein*’s heavy promotion in the wake of *Dracula*, which I discuss in more detail in Chapter Two, no doubt helped distributors to market it as a *Dracula* follow-up and as part of an incipient cycle. The Chicago reporter commented: “They anticipated this one a mile away; got going on its opening hour ...”¹⁸

Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde came to many theatres, like McVicker’s in Chicago, the week after *Frankenstein* had ended its run. The Chicago reporter noted that it was “not expected to reach its full strength due to the three weeks of heavy money for ‘Frankenstein’, which notably quenched the bloodthirsty for some time”, but said later in the same report that thanks to good notices the film had garnered a “pleasant \$26, 000” in its first week.¹⁹ It eventually stayed nearly three weeks. Despite its competitive closeness to the *Frankenstein*, *Dr. Jekyll* still managed excellent box office receipts in nearly all of the cinemas reported by *Variety*, and was a standout hit in many places. In New York, where it stayed five weeks, it had “smash characteristics in \$60, 000 opening

week; only house on street to have a b. o. line early Monday afternoon; getting strong lip to lip, and figure is of mountainous size for house and pace of recent months."²⁰ At the Minnesota Theatre in Minneapolis, it enjoyed the "biggest Friday opening in theatre's history."²¹

Murders in the Rue Morgue, while by no means a disaster, failed to match the impressive success of the three horror films which had preceded it. *Variety's* review already doubtful about how much more mileage there was in the cycle:

'Dracula' and 'Frankenstein' having softened 'em up, this third of the baby-scaring cycle won't have the benefit of shocking them stiff and then making them talk about it. Had it come first there's no doubt it would have created a stronger impression. But it thrills sufficiently in its hokey, gruesome way and, being by nature receptive to dynamite exploiting, should land moderately well.²²

Murders did "land moderately well", if nothing else. In Chicago, it stayed a fortnight, but "first week took an unexciting \$20, 300, and currently perhaps weak \$12, 000". Cincinnati noted "little fan urge to see this thriller", while in New York box office receipts were "fair"²³. In Minneapolis, "after starting big last week, 'Rue Morgue' fell miserably and failed to give a good account of itself," although it did reasonably well in Washington, New Orleans and Tacoma.²⁴ In Pittsburgh it had a bright spot, getting the cinema's "best opening in two months." "This burg still seems to go for corpses," noted the reporter.²⁵

These few months saw a rush of horror releases and a trend towards the use of horror angles in the exploitation of thrillers. Columbia released the thriller *Behind the Mask* in May, which did solid business horror-themed marketing campaign focused around its borrowed star, Boris Karloff.²⁶ *Variety* commented on the opportunism it saw as driving the film's horror elements:

Exploited as another horror picture, this doesn't horrify sufficiently to class with preceding baby-scarers. But its virtues are a not-so-bad secret service story ... The scare stuff seems tossed in regardless of where it fits, but it gets results.²⁷

The Old Dark House, directed by James Whale and released by Universal in January, was a heavily tongue-in-cheek revival of the obsolete 'old dark house' mystery thriller of the 1920s. *The Monster Walks*, meanwhile, another 'old dark house' thriller released by the minor in May 1932, was disparaged by *Variety* as a "strictly pattern mystery story" which "happens along about three years too late."²⁸ *The Old Dark House's* successful

association with the horror cycle through James Whale, Boris Karloff and its marketing campaign, while its satirical elements distance it from its 1920s mystery predecessors, is informative. *The Old Dark House*'s absorption into the horror cycle, despite its titular association with another kind of mystery thriller, suggests again how horror was not just a discrete cycle but also a fashionable marketing angle which was used to spice up or revive existing kinds of film.

The next big-budget horror release, *Freaks*, directed by Tod Browning for MGM and released in February 1932, was the cycle's only real financial disaster. A high-budget film set backstage at a contemporary circus, like Browning's silent films it eschewed the fantastic and focused instead on disability and deformity – and recruited a large cast of disabled performers, many of whom worked in circus sideshows like the one depicted in the film. *Freaks* not only tanked in first-run cinemas around the country, but also accrued controversy and outraged critical pannings wherever it went – enough to make the controversy attached to *Frankenstein* and *Dracula* look mild.²⁹ I discuss *Freaks*' controversy and financial failure, and its impact upon the cycle in greater detail in Chapter Three. Its financial failure ensured that later films in the cycle did not follow up on the significantly different generic direction in which it took horror.

Despite its financial losses and the bad press it caused, *Freaks* did not kill the cycle. The success of *Frankenstein* and the films which followed it had been enough to convince studios that *Dracula* had not been a fluke, and that “insomnia producers”, as *Variety* once called them³⁰, could be box office. By the time *Freaks* was released, another wave of horrors had gone into production. By now horror was less of a gamble, more of a confirmed trend to be exploited. The new films reflected this in their diversity, encompassing a mix of well-budgeted A-films, sixty-minute programmers, and opportunistic attempts to add a horror angle to more conventional mystery thrillers.

By the summer, however, the trade began to anticipate the end of the fad – as I mentioned above, film cycles typically only lasted a year or two. In July, *Variety* noted that Fox's *Almost Married*, a remake of an MGM film from 1919 retooled as a horror, was “a belated starter in the horror series started by Universal's ‘Dracula’”.³¹

In August and September, the independent voodoo-themed *White Zombie* and Warner's *Doctor X* both did solid, sometimes excellent box office around the country.³² *Doctor X*

was a fairly successful attempt by Warner to adapt the trend to their studio brand. The film combined mad scientist and monster tropes with an emphatically modern, urban New York setting, a wisecracking reporter character, and fast-paced, colloquial dialogue. It also had another selling point unique in the cycle so far in its use of two-colour Technicolor. Its review in *Variety* praised the box-office potential of its genre-mixing:

'Doctor X' combines the horripilating and the mysterious successfully enough on both counts, plus a great color job, to insure results that top recent house averages. ...Over and above the chiller and murder-mystery angles, there's also the doctor cycle offshoot for whatever possible value that may mean. ... A lot of 'Doctor X' is routine, including the love interest and the conventional murder mystery technique and background, but with material of three cycles involved, it does not become tedious.³³

Doctor X's box office success was enough for a follow-up, *Mystery of the Wax Museum* (Warner, 1933, dir. Michael Curtiz), to be put into production featuring the same stars, same formula of placing a horror plot in contemporary New York, and same use of two-colour Technicolor.

In October and November, the horror-angled jungle thriller *The Most Dangerous Game* (RKO, 1932, dir. Ernest Schoedsack, Irving Pichel) did decent business.³⁴ *The Most Dangerous Game* was the first in an RKO cycle apparently designed, like Warners' horror films, to offer a product with some appeal distinct from Universal's horror films.

Around the same time MGM's second attempt at a big-budget horror film, *The Mask of Fu Manchu*, a horror reworking of a long-running series which had been marketed as melodrama, with Boris Karloff replacing Warner Oland in the title role, did relatively poor business for its budget.³⁵ In November MGM also put out *Kongo*, a remake of Tod Browning's silent *West of Zanzibar* which combined "tropical and horror stuff".³⁶

King Kong, RKO's second jungle film, was released in March 1933. It was enormously successful at the box office, more so than another film of the cycle, staying for an impressive three weeks on Broadway.³⁷ However, many reviews disputed its status as a horror cycle film at all. Louella O. Parsons' review of *King Kong* (RKO, 1933, dir. Merian C. Cooper and Ernest B. Schoedsack) in the *Los Angeles Examiner* commented that the audience at Grauman's Chinese Theater was "breathless with suspense, nervous with suppressed emotion and thrilled with continued horrors", but goes on to suggest that the film is a "novelty", "the most unique screen offering up to date" and "something entirely

new in the way of motion picture entertainment”, which cannot be adequately categorised by any of the existing genres, like horror, on which it draws. *Variety* meanwhile suggested that *King Kong* was generically nearly without precedent, resembling only a previous film of the producers’, *The Lost World*.³⁸ The fairest assessment would seem to be that while elements of *King Kong*, and the RKO jungle series of which it was a part, *responded* to the horror cycle, the trade and mainstream press were divided in how closely they associated it with horror, and how they chose to prioritise this as a selling point in comparison to its novelty and special effects.

By early 1933, the trade press believed that the cycle was dying down, and were anticipating current horror releases to be among the last of the crop. In January *Variety* commented of Paramount’s *Island of Lost Souls* and Universal’s *The Mummy*, both of which did reasonable box office, that “the spine-chilling stuff has been overdone in the past year and no longer boast box-office potency.”³⁹ Speaking of *Island*’s solid but modest success on a slow week, their Pittsburgh correspondent lamented: “Had it come along a year ago would have been a clean-up.”⁴⁰ Reviewing the independent Majestic’s *The Vampire Bat*, another January 1933 release, *Variety* complained that the picture was:

... well enough done but coming along too late in the cycle to figure in the money ... Grave-yard-at-midnight cycle has passed like any number of given cycles. Couple of other cycles have come and gone, the lawyer vogue for one, since the horror craze was at its peak. So a painstaking and well-made production misses ... Now the fans know all those tricks and at this late date they’re shock-proof from such devices; be they ever so well-done, as they are here.⁴¹

Trade comments in the next few months continued to reflect this point of view, although during this period several other horror films, including Warner’s *Mystery of the Wax Museum*, Paramount’s *Supernatural* and *Murders in the Zoo* and the horror-inflected *King Kong* were released and all at least reasonably successful – in *King Kong*’s case, very successful indeed. *Variety* took a similar line on RKO’s *The Monkey’s Paw* in June, commenting that it was “too late to ride along with the goose-pimple cycle of last year.”⁴² ... ‘Paw’ is not a picture for the general audience and too labored for the art theatres.”

After April 1933, horror releases tailed off for much of the year. Universal released another big-budget horror film, *The Invisible Man* in November, and it proved a turning point for the horror cycle’s fortunes. In New York it gave the Roxy “its biggest gross in

years", and elsewhere in the country it was "in the b.o. class of 'Dracula' and 'Frankenstein'", financially justifying its lengthy production period and over-budget direction.⁴³ As a film, it established that horror was still lively and bankable. The trade attributed its success to its fresh approach to horror. *Variety* praised it as "... a picture that develops something new and refreshing in film frighteners" and expressed the hope that "urgent campaigning" for it could compensate for the fact that "chillers were sometime ago presumed to have spent themselves as boxoffice."⁴⁴ *The Hollywood Reporter* similarly commented that:

"Invisible Man" is a legitimate offspring of the family that produced "Frankenstein" and "Dracula", but a lusty, healthy, willing-to-laugh youngster, who can stand on his own feet ... it will fare better in the neighborhoods than either of its predecessors, for while it is "horror" it is also "horror comedy" – they get their laughs with the shrieks, and the kiddies won't go home to sport in nightmares through the slumbering hours.

You really have to give a big hand to the little man, Carl Laemmle Jr. This is a NEW idea, if there ever was one. It took courage to decide to make it, it IS so new.⁴⁵

In the months after *The Invisible Man's* release, only a few horror and horror-angled films were released, which fits with the fact that *Invisible Man's* quality and success seemed to surprise the trade. A lower-budget *King Kong* sequel, *Son of Kong*, and the British production *The Ghoul*, with a holidaying Boris Karloff, were released in January. Universal's first Karloff-Lugosi feature, *The Black Cat*, followed in May, and Columbia's voodoo-themed *Black Moon* in July.

In 1935, however, there is a sudden, confident upswing in horror production, which may result from either belated capitalizing on *The Invisible Man's* success or, more likely, widespread trade awareness that Universal were preparing a lavishly budgeted sequel to *Frankenstein* to be released in the early summer. At any rate, the rush of 1935 releases saw the trade press's attitude towards horror shift noticeably towards the idea of horror as a longer-term trend which had proved to have a reliable market.

Bride of Frankenstein, released around the country in May, lived up to expectations and became one of the cycle's greatest box office successes. In Los Angeles *Bride's* opening week gave the Pantages Theatre "one of biggest weeks it has had in its career." Around the country, the film did similarly magnificent business. On Broadway, it broke attendance records at the Roxy, "so far outdistancing everything else there is no comparison."⁴⁶

Whether because of or despite *Bride's* performance, the glut of horror films which arrived one after another in the cinemas in the spring and summer of 1935 nearly all managed to do very good box office without overcrowding the market. *Mark of the Vampire* did good, solid business around the country, running for two weeks on Broadway, in Minneapolis and in Los Angeles. It was enough of a success for MGM to give Tod Browning the director's chair on the higher-budget *The Devil Doll*. *Werewolf of London*, too, was "great with kids" in LA, running for two weeks, and also did consistently well around the country. *The Raven* was held over in Minneapolis and did decent program business, while *The Black Room* did above average business in Los Angeles and Minneapolis.⁴⁷ Only *Mad Love*, released at the tail end of this string of horrors, made an overall loss.⁴⁸ Another independent horror film, Invincible Pictures' *Condemned to Live*, was released in October, and Republic's *The Crime of Dr. Crespi* in January 1936. The latter did well on Broadway despite its low budget and some rather harsh reviews.⁴⁹

While the horror films released in 1936 were, in the broad sweep, not as profitable, they still did decent business. Several lower budget films - *The Invisible Ray* (Universal, 1935, dir. Edmund Grainger), *The Walking Dead* and the independent Halperin brothers production *Revolt of the Zombies* did business varying from excellent to struggling depending on the city. Meanwhile, the bigger-budget films *Dracula's Daughter* and *The Devil Doll* enjoyed far better receipts. *Dracula's Daughter* ran for two weeks on Broadway, making "a happy figure", and enjoyed solid success, with particularly excellent business in Chicago, San Francisco, and Minneapolis.⁵⁰ *The Devil Doll* was a less notable success, but still ended up \$68,000 in profit, Tod Browning's most successful film for years.⁵¹

Throughout the cycle, two alternative explanations of the cycle's success and its key audience competed in discussions of horror. One initial explanation treated horror as a potentially short-term "fad" whose popularity had a broad base across the cinemagoing public. This explanation became gradually less popular as the horror cycle continued well past the one to two year span of shorter cycles. Correspondingly, another explanation became increasingly prevalent, especially in the trade press: that of a specialised fan market who were serial consumers of horror films. Such reviews clearly suggest that while individual, prestige horror films like *Bride of Frankenstein* might be impressively successful, the cycle was beginning to be considered a staple genre whose

programmers, well-made, could reliably appeal to a stable niche market of cinema-goers who “went for” that sort of thing. Horror was not a waning fad. On the contrary, familiarity seems to have shifted it towards a staple genre category with an established audience of “shocker fans” for whom spectatorship of horror films was a regular entertainment.

Both trade reviews and box office reports from 1935 and 1936 see the market for horror films as stable rather than declining – quite a contrast from their expectation in 1932-3 that the horror cycle was a brief fad. For instance, the *New York Times* review of *The Walking Dead* in March 1936 remarked that “horror pictures are a staple commodity, and this one was taken from one of the better shelves.” *Hollywood Reporter* said in May 1936 of *Dracula’s Daughter*: “With the stout box office of “Dracula”, “Frankenstein” and the other chillers on Universal’s list a matter of record, it is a safe bet that this latest one will make money.” *Variety* said of the same film: “Rates tops among recent horror pictures and, as such, figures to deliver nice grosses. ... sufficiently shocking for the horror-pic fans.” Other typical comments were “should give the “horror” fans all they want” (*Motion Picture Herald* on *Mark of the Vampire*), “audiences liking horror should go for this” (*Motion Picture Daily* on *Mad Love*), and: “If your customers like horrors, they will find what they want here ... Karloff and Bela Lugosi should mean much in bringing in your shocker fans” (*Film Daily* on *The Raven*).⁵²

During this period, more examples can be found of opportunistic horror angles in the marketing of films not primarily received as horror. In January 1935, *The Man Who Reclaimed His Head*, a drama about war profiteering, was marketed with a horror-angled campaign. For instance one poster evokes horror indirectly but thoroughly, being dominated by a giant skull, while in the background a man lit from below cowers in the grip of the hand of a shrivelled corpse. The tagline proclaims “Accused – of the world’s most monstrous crime!”⁵³ *Variety* disputed the angle, however, opening its review by stating “This isn’t a horror picture, as the title and memory of Rains in other films might suggest.”⁵⁴ In 1936, one poster for the medical drama *The Story of Louis Pasteur* uses a similar indirect evocation of horror, selling the film as a *Jekyll and Hyde* story with two contrasting pictures of Paul Muni – one handsome and clean shaven, the other bearded, glowering and lit from below – and the tagline “Was he hero ... or monster?”⁵⁵ Knowing that horror angles were occasionally used in marketing during this time, to widen the

appeal of films not generally identified as horror, is useful because it helps confirm that the trade still considered horror marketable.

Box office reports from 1935-1936 quite frequently mention the reliable popularity of horror at particular theatres and in particular towns. For instance, *Werewolf of London* in Portland, in June 1935, was taken to be "getting a play on mystic horror angle which has ducat sales value in these parts."⁵⁶ *Variety's* Chicago reporter similarly explained *The Invisible Ray's* success at the State-Lake in July 1935 by saying that "Boris Karloff is always a magnet in this house," and commented of *The Raven's* good business at the same house in April 1936, horror "is caviar for this audience."⁵⁷ Of *Dracula's Daughter's* success in San Francisco in June 1936, the reporter commented that "films of the horror type always go well in Frisco", and similarly of a Cleveland theatre the same week, "this spot has regular clientele of thrill-seekers."⁵⁸ Interestingly, none of this available data on the box office performance of horror films in 1936 gives any hint of the upcoming cessation of horror production.

As I discuss much more fully in Chapters One and Four, available evidence suggests that censorship difficulties rather than the natural waning of the trend influenced the abrupt end of horror production in the summer of 1936. A May 1936 *Variety* article entitled "Horror Films Taken Off U Sked", reporting Universal's decision to cease producing and marketing films as horror, notes that:

Reason attributed by U for abandonment of horror cycle is that European countries, especially England, are prejudiced against this type product. Despite heavy local consumption of its chillers, U. is taking heed to warning from abroad.⁵⁹

In Chapter Four, I argue that these censorship difficulties were more complex in origin than this article suggests, and that the PCA, whom the studios relied upon to interpret foreign censorship issues, played up and even actively misreported the British censorship situation in an attempt to persuade the studios that horror was more trouble than it was worth. Advertising and promotion of *The Devil Doll* (MGM, 1936, dir. Tod Browning) avoided the heat of controversy and censorship by claiming not to be horror "in any sense of the word" but instead "the novelty picture of the year".⁶⁰ *The Devil Doll* began production as a horror film and was identified as an entry in the cycle by some reviews, but as we will see its claim to be novelty rather than horror was not merely

disingenuous, but descriptive of a shift in its content during internal censorship negotiations.

Horror releases and horror-angled marketing completely ceased from mid-1936 to late 1938. As I detail in Chapter Five, several studios attempted to put horror films onto their production schedules during this time but were dissuaded from doing so by harshly worded PCA advice. In autumn 1938, after a highly successful revival of *Dracula* and *Frankenstein* as a double bill, the studios finally ignored the warnings, and horror films re-emerged on to the production schedules. However, as I shall examine in Chapter Five, despite the strong market for horror suggested by the revival's success, the two year hiatus had also crystallised a sense in some quarters of both trade and mainstream journalism that much about the tropes and style of the 1930s horror cycle had become overfamiliar, even dated.

As I discuss in Chapter Five, many critics see the horror films of 1939 onwards as a continuation of the 1930s cycle. Conversely, I argue that they are more usefully seen not just as a new cycle but as a series of small, distinctive studio-specific cycles. The studios dealt with the perceived overfamiliarity of the chiller by reworking it in different forms, transforming it into new films and cycles which very frequently blended horror with other genre elements and marketing angles. For instance, Universal's *Hound of the Baskervilles* (1939) began a new Sherlock Holmes mystery series marketed with strong horror angles, while Columbia's *The Man They Could Not Hang* (1939) was the first in a series of three crime-horror films. Different studios and series, often produced by small dedicated horror units like RKO's or Universal's, took care to differentiate their product from that of other studios by establishing a readily identifiable 'house style', and also often widened appeal with multiple genre angles. While some films and series of the 1930s horror cycle (for instance Warner's urban horror films) had deployed similar strategies, these 1940s unit products tended to vary from each other in a much more coherent and consistent manner than had 1930s horror films from different studios.

Arguably, horror itself having lost its novelty *per se* and shifted from a single cycle towards a broader and more established genre category, marketing and trade reviews were more concerned with distinguishing a new studio product from existing and past horror films, and making other generic connections with fashionable kinds of film. For instance, *Phantom of the Opera* (Universal, 1943) was reworked as a high-budget

Technicolor musical, and promoted and reviewed as emphasising its visually spectacular musical staging over horror elements. *Harrison's Reports* noted that it "[retained] the horrific flavor of the original, but to a lesser degree", and was "more of a musical."⁶¹

In the period from 1939 to 1942, major changes took place in horror production and horror discussion. The horror cycle fragmented and expanded into a different kind of generic category, more mobile and open. Horror's fragmentation and increased mobility co-incided with a growth of its generic status, from a cycle whose future was frequently doubted by sources from *Variety* to the Production Code Administration, to a more established and varied generic category.

0.4 Economic emergency, the film industry, and the cinema/censorship controversy in 1930s America

The films of the 1930s horror cycle were produced during a period of unparalleled economic crisis, both in the USA and worldwide. As I will explain more fully in Chapter One, it is not my intent in this thesis to argue that the horror cycle was in some way an outgrowth or expression of the cultural and economic upheavals of the Depression. However, it is still relevant and pertinent to offer some brief context here, first for the material ways in which the Depression affected cinemagoing and the Hollywood film industry in this period, and more crucially for this thesis, the censorship crisis which was severely exacerbated by the Depression and which had a very direct and important effect upon the horror cycle, and on Hollywood cinema in general.

Although cinematic portrayals of the Crash have frequently turned on images of sudden nationwide panic, the Depression took some time to affect many parts of American society, including the cinema industry. In fact, it was over a year before it filtered through to the Hollywood studios. In 1930, film attendance actually rose, to an all-time high of 80 million patrons a week.⁶² However, when it hit, it hit hard. In 1930, the combined profits of the "Big Eight" film studios amounted to \$50 million; in 1931, this plummeted to \$6.5 million.⁶³

In the first ten months of 1930, cinema attendance dropped from a healthy 90 million attendees per week to 60 million.⁶⁴ By mid-1932, 6,500 cinemas had shut, leaving 13,000 open. However, at the point when attendance was at its lowest, 40,000,000 Americans were buying cinema tickets every week.⁶⁵

Under the circumstances, this is hardly surprising: on average, 100,000 workers were made unemployed every week in the three years following the 1929 Wall Street Crash. By the end of 1932, 34 million people, which is to say 28% of the population, were currently unemployed, and national income had dropped from \$81 billion, in 1929, to \$41 billion.⁶⁶ Perhaps the more striking fact is not that cinema attendance dropped so much in the Depression, but that so many people in straitened and frequently desperate circumstances kept up the luxury of going to the movies. This would seem to support what became a central contention of censorship campaigners: the incontestably pre-eminent place of cinemagoing in American culture and leisure.

Nevertheless, the Depression had the major studios constantly struggling to keep their heads above water. Paramount, which at the end of the 1920s, had been the most powerful studio, made an \$8 million profit in 1930, but by the end of 1933 it was \$20 million in debt, despite a 33.3% cut in budgets, reduction in salaries, and the \$41.2 million sale of its share in CBS. Paramount went into receivership. Fox, meanwhile, was in debt to the tune of \$11.5 million in 1932, and the holding company for its theatres went into receivership that year. Warner Bros. survived by "paring budgets to the bone" and closing 300 of its 700 theatres.⁶⁷ The economic crisis within the film industry reached its worst during the four day bank holiday declared by new President Franklin Roosevelt on coming to power in March 1933, in order to draft emergency legislation to combat the Depression. Box office receipts during this period fell by a crippling further 45%.⁶⁸ Roosevelt's New Deal, however, saw a gradual period of recovery, although the economic after-effects of the Depression were still being felt within and outside the film industry into the late 1930s.⁶⁹

Donald Crafton argues for a general trend after 1930s for studios to "cut back budgets, [downsize], and [focus] on turning out product that would add to the bottom line."⁷⁰ In this environment, there was a greater focus upon film cycles as a means of exploiting and maximizing the profitability of major hits and trends.

The film industry, financially drained and desperate to entice impoverished audiences back into the cinemas, faced an additional hurdle. Impelled by Warner's 1927 success with *The Jazz Singer*, Hollywood studios had committed to a complete conversion to sound production, in a rush of optimistic enthusiasm during 1927 and 1928, before the stock market crash of 1929. Finance for this grand project was secured from industry backers, and by 1929 40% of all motion pictures were already being produced on sound film.⁷¹ In mainland America, the stock market crash did not result in a noticeable slowdown, partly because the studios' financial and industrial commitment was already irreversible.

Unlike Technicolor cinema, which co-existed with black and white film in Hollywood for many years, sound film was firmly conceived as a replacement for silent film. The transition from one to the other involved a vast investment of finance, technology, training and new personnel. New actors, directors and writers had to be imported, new technicians trained, film style adapted to accommodate dialogue. A myriad of technical problems, such as soundproofing sets, silencing cameras and arc lamps, and establishing how to edit a sound film, had to be solved. Moreover, vertical integration meant that the studios were not only investing in the substantial technical and artistic overhaul needed to reliably produce sound films, but also committing to upgrade thousands of studio-owned theatres across the country to play sound films. Technicolor cinema, on the other hand, much more compatible with existing technology and filmmaking practices, took several decades to move from prestigious gimmick to industrial norm, and colour and black and white films existed in the same studios and cinemas for years.

Aside from conversion costs, the production of sound film was initially far more expensive than that of silent film. At the end of 1930, the *Exhibitor's Herald World* reported United States Census Bureau figures estimating that sound film production was "near ten times that of silent." While some of this cost, like increased salaries and new personnel, was related to conversion, the Census Bureau figures also cite important factors like more expensive laboratory work and negative stock.⁷²

Financial necessity also arguably forced Hollywood to adapt to and standardise sound filmmaking more rapidly than it might. The transitional period where conventions for sound filmmaking are not yet entrenched, and films often display obvious signs of

struggle with the demands of sound, is extremely brief. Donald Grafton argues that by the end of 1931 sound was completely standardised and integrated aesthetically, practically and economically into Hollywood production practices.⁷³

As I will further discuss in Chapter One, Robert Sklar's previously accepted notion of a "Golden Age of Turbulence", in which early 1930s Hollywood films became increasingly subversive and transgressive in content, partly in response to the Depression, has now largely been debunked by the work of Richard Maltby, Ruth Vasey and Lea Jacobs. Instead, these scholars argue that the exponential growth of campaigning for cinema censorship in the late 1920s and early 1930s was not provoked by any change in film content, but by wider social and cultural factors. I discuss recent developments in censorship scholarship, including the reasons for my reliance on these particular sources for my historical narrative here, in more detail in Chapter One.

Nevertheless, Maltby argues that conflict between the independent censorship lobby and the Motion Pictures Producers' and Distributors' Association, the industry's public relations and internal censorship body, was certainly exacerbated by "the industry's predilection for the crude but reliable market mechanism of rushing imitations of profitable pictures into production, generating seasonal cycles."⁷⁴ During the first half of the 1930s, there was increasing tension between the concerns of censorship campaigners and the film industry's reliance on sensation, taboo and controversy as an effective way of marketing films and drawing box office in a hostile economic climate. Controversy usually boosted the profitability of individual films, making them more likely to feed into a cycle – but that same controversy would provide the censorship lobby with "evidence of the industry's lack of social responsibility."⁷⁵ Given the short-term promotional effects such controversy could have, the presence of a number of controversial cycles, such as the gangster cycle and 'kept woman' cycle, besides the horror cycle, is not surprising.

Maltby suggests that *Dracula's* huge commercial success despite vocal criticisms from cinema campaigners and local censor boards exemplified the dilemma of the industry: "some of the material most likely to produce immediate high returns in first-run theatres, and thus maintain company liquidity, also provoked reform groups to claim the [Production] Code was being ignored." The studios thus found themselves caught between two economic imperatives: the cinematic pleasures which were apparently

keeping the industry afloat were also in danger of sinking it.⁷⁶ The studios were well aware of this gap between the demands of pressure groups and the demands of the box office. Carl Laemmle Sr. had sniped in 1927 that "the public now knows we stand for clean pictures and that invariably they are too damn clean and they stay away on account of it."⁷⁷

Richard Maltby has argued that during the 1920s, progressive reform and Prohibition had largely benefited cinema, as it was a mass leisure pursuit which provided an alternative to drinking. Progressive concern about the cinema did exist, however, and frequently manifested itself in the form of proposals for federal supervision or regulation of film production and content. Nevertheless, the Motion Pictures Producers' and Distributors' Association, the industry's public relations body, and specifically Will Hays, President of the MPPDA, had managed to largely co-opt such concern by inviting bodies like the General Federation of Women's Clubs into a coalition of 'responsible groups' to advise them.⁷⁸

Maltby argues that a number of events at the end of the 1920s destabilised this coalition and revitalised independent censorship campaigning.⁷⁹ In late 1929 an Episcopalian newspaper called *The Churchman* alleged that Hays' coalition was corrupt, and that officials of civic and religious organisations had been offered 'retainer' fees in exchange for their approval of films. Within the Protestant religious press, this initiated a campaign upon the subject and a broader trend from 1930 onwards, towards heavy criticism of the film industry, and suspicion of Hays' reform attempts, and renewed calls for federal censorship.⁸⁰

State censorship boards also became much more active during this period, and much more unpredictable in their activity. By 1930, there were censor boards in seven states and fifty-five cities, and if they objected to a film's content, they simply banned or re-cut it.⁸¹ The more severe examples of local cutting, which, as we will see, often excised crucial scenes, was rarely undertaken by professional editors, and could potentially damage a film's business.

Prior to the 1929 crash, Maltby notes a general trend for Protestant provincial middle class to perceive their cultural power as threatened by "the incursions of a modernist, metropolitan culture that the provincials regarded as alien ... the movie theater was one

site at which they felt their values and their children endangered by a newer, urban, immigrant, largely Jewish and Catholic culture.”⁸²

Such sentiments were thoroughly exacerbated by the 1929 Wall Street Crash. Conservative Protestant commentators frequently made permissiveness and moral decadence the scapegoats for the Crash and the cultural and economic crisis of the Depression. Such arguments frequently concerned themselves with threats to the family unit, focusing on gender and childhood. Maltby connects the rise of specific concern with the effects of cinema viewing upon children with this trend.⁸³ Ruth Vasey supports Maltby's view, stating that “moral insecurity” caused by the Depression was responsible for much of the industry's public-relations crisis.⁸⁴ Indeed, the 1930s saw a rise in moral conservatism within American culture in general.⁸⁵

This decline of Protestantism's social influence co-incided with a rise in what Maltby refers to as “a project of confident Catholic cultural assertiveness”, particularly through the Catholic Action movement, which made moral interventions into various cultural arenas, but particularly cinema. Father Daniel Lord, one of the writers of the Production Code, was involved with this movement.⁸⁶ As I will detail further below, this struggle for cultural power between Catholic and Protestant influences expressed itself in the censorship campaign in competition and struggle over movie reform. It sometimes informed conflicts between Production Code censorship and independent censorship pressure groups like the Motion Picture Research Council, most of which were pro-federal censorship. Whether the MPRC themselves campaigned for federal censorship is a point of controversy, as I will explain further below.

This rise in film censorship activism also co-incided with a decline in the censorship of more established art forms such as the novel, the theatre and magazines, especially on the part of the Catholic Church, as Ruth Vasey has usefully charted.⁸⁷ The emergence of sound cinema seemed to catalyse a widespread acknowledgement of its pre-eminent place in Western society as a popular art form. This was an argument which frequently incorporated concerns regarding class and cultural power like those cited above, and specifically regarding the regulation of working class social behaviour through leisure. The Production Code, attempting to synthesise such concerns, argues that while most arts appeal only to the “mature”, and have “[their] grades for different classes”:

... the art of the motion picture, combining as it does the two fundamental appeals of looking at a picture and listening to a story, at once reaches every class of society ... The exhibitor's theatres are built for the masses, for the cultivated and the rude, mature and immature, self-restrained and inflammatory, young and old, law-respecting and criminal.⁸⁸

Arguments for film censorship frequently invoked a well-developed discourse concerning the social effects of cinema, which often cited the accessibility of cinema to those social groups who were supposedly the most easily morally influenced. Arguments about cinema's negative social effects tended to rely on the idea that spectators might simply imitate the behaviour of characters in a film. Campaigners argued that this was especially true of vulnerable and easily influenced spectators – the young and the working-class, and especially those who were both. For instance, there was a vogue for film plots and magazine articles dealing with the trope of the "movie-struck" girl who, hypnotised by the screen, and particularly influenced by such poor role-models as the heroines of the gold-digger cycle, runs away to become an actress. Usually in such narratives, she is left stranded, jobless, vulnerable and prone to seduction on the streets of L.A. In fact, the M.P.P.D.A., with an eye to countering this criticism, even sponsored a YWCA residence for young women looking for acting work. Similarly, it was worried that gangster films encouraged poor boys in the cities to turn to violent crime in order to escape from poverty to luxury, and that "sex pictures" encouraged young women into promiscuity and prostitution.

The Production Code followed these various censorship advocates in its argument that the screen provided a spectacle far more compelling and influential for the young, poor and impressionable than did literature or theatre. For instance, the *San Francisco News*, reporting on the Payne Fund Studies in August 1933, notes that:

It was never necessary to make such a careful study of the stage, because it has been definitely shown that stage plays in general have little effect on young children. Youngsters just don't "get them." But they understand the movies, and remember them in almost as great detail as do adults, the tests showed.⁸⁹

Early anti-horror criticism, as I will argue in Chapters Two and Three, also based its arguments on the negative effects of such films on the nerves, and relied especially on the suggestion of more intense effects on more vulnerable classes of spectator, specifically children and those of nervous or neurotic temperament. It was therefore so far congruent with the broader concern of moral effects on which most arguments for censorship centred. However, during the early part of the cycle, the anti-horror argument

of independent cinema campaigners was much less developed than that against sex or violence in films.

The Production Code of 1930 was the cornerstone of a broader strategic response by the film industry to increasing controversy and censorship activism. It was designed as a far more extensive and efficient rewriting of a previous list of problem subjects from 1927, known as the "Don'ts and Be Carefuls". This list had proved far too sketchy and incomplete to anticipate the range of censorship problems which could be raised by different organisations and places. Through it, Motion Picture Producers' and Distributors' Association to anticipate criticisms of both of cinema in general and individual films and cycles by monitoring and negotiating the content of individual films before release, and by more broadly aiming to encourage film trends which showed the industry in a good light, and discourage the controversial and sensational. Thus, it aimed to integrate censorship "within the larger institution of cinema production, distribution and exhibition" and thereby to permanently answer those pressure groups who called for federal censorship.⁹⁰

The Code was patched together out of two documents drafted roughly at the same time. The first was drafted by Martin Quigley, who was editor of the *Motion Picture Herald* and a Catholic activist, in October 1929 with the help of Father Daniel Lord, S.J., editor of the Catholic youth magazine *The Queen's Work*. The second had been written by the MGM producer Irving Thalberg working with a committee, and was entitled "General Principles to Govern the Preparation of a Revised Code of Ethics for Talking Pictures." After a fractious MPPDA meeting concerning these two documents, Will Hays sent Quigley and Lord off to redraft the Code, unifying their Catholic-oriented "Reasons" with Thalberg's more pragmatic "Principles". After the MPPDA West Coast board ratified the Code on February 17th 1930, the "Reasons" were not included in the version for publication released to the press. On March 13th, the more powerful New York board of the MPPDA endorsed the Code.⁹¹

The new Production Code was in fact an ambitious attempt to unite such differing concerns and models of film morality, censorship and taboo into a single, coherent and comprehensive charter with a distinctive philosophy and theory of cinema and morality. It aimed to unite the confusingly varied objections and concerns of the censorship lobby into a single umbrella policy which they could all subscribe to, and to which the industry

could adhere. Unlike the “Don’ts and Be Carefuls”, it was not merely a laundry list of subjects and elements offensive to different groups. The list of banned subjects, actions and words which is often popularly supposed to constitute the “Hays Code” in fact only constitutes the final pages of a lengthy document: most versions are over twenty pages long.⁹² Most of the body of the Production Code is taken up with a broader argument concerning the cinema, which reasons from general principles to specific applications.

It took some years to integrate Code regulation fully into production, and for the first half of the 1930s, the censorship debate was defined by the struggle between different censorship organisations and pressure groups and particularly between the industry’s development of internal censorship via the Production Code, and independent and local groups. As I have suggested above, this was also in part a struggle over broader issues of cultural power, concerning in Maltby’s words “who possessed the appropriate authority to police the ideological apparatus of representation.”⁹³

Much of the burden of administering the Code was assigned to the MPPDA’s Studio Relations Committee. It was the task of this body to review scripts and finished films, monitor compliance with the Code, to advise negotiate with studios over problematic elements in individual films, and to intercede with local censors on behalf of studios. During the years after the Code was introduced, the SRC’s practices were tightened and its powers bolstered by the MPPDA several times. The most public of these changes was in 1934, when the SRC was renamed the Production Code Administration, its staff expanded, and the former public relations man and Hays Office employee Joseph Breen brought in to head it.⁹⁴ The SRC and PCA aimed to anticipate objections, so a successful policy for them would mean that censorship of a film took place through internal negotiation before release, rather than through local cuts, bans and outcries afterwards. In fact, they aimed to supersede the many voices of local and independent censorship, encompassing all objections and unifying film regulation through a body which unlike independent campaigners and local censor boards, was friendly to the film industry – indeed, in some senses a part of it.

In September 1931, the submission of scripts to the Studio Relations Committee became compulsory, and on December 24, 1931, the studio-relations committee gained the right to appeal to the “Hollywood jury”, a committee of producers, in case of dispute. However, in February 1932, Senator Smith Brookhart of Iowa, looking for re-election, introduced a

resolution to investigate the film industry. He claimed that Hays had “done nothing toward improving the moral tone of the movies.” By the end of 1932 almost 40 religious, educational and citizen groups passed resolutions calling for federal regulation.⁹⁵

Although local censor eliminations were down by 30-50 percent since the introduction of the Production Code, the broader censorship campaign became more and more vocal. As Richard Maltby has pointed out, “every time the Association responded to one kind of complaint, it was replaced by another.”⁹⁶ The most major of these controversies was the publication of the Payne Fund Studies.

In May and June 1933, *Christian Century* and *Survey Graphic* magazines serialised the Payne Fund Studies, a series of scientific studies funded by the Motion Picture Research Council, the most influential Protestant cinema campaigning organisation. The head of the MPRC, Rev. William H. Short, had recruited leading psychologists and sociologists to perform these studies, which appeared to provide empirical back up for established arguments about the negative psychological and social effects of cinema, on children and adolescents in particular.⁹⁷ This bad publicity became even worse on the release of Henry J. Forman's *Our Movie-Made Children*, an emotive anti-cinema polemic authorised by the MPRC to summarise the results. *Our Movie-Made Children* became a bestseller, and moreover was widely discussed in the media.⁹⁸ Moreover, it devoted a chapter specifically to the negative effects of horror films, providing the fullest and most high-profile discussion yet of the case for horror as a censorship problem.

Despite its skewing of the Studies' more moderate and uncertain conclusions regarding cinema effects, *Our Movie-Made Children* cemented the Payne Fund Studies' impact on public opinion. Maltby argues that “the scientific credibility of the “Payneful” Studies made the MPRC's demands for federal regulation a profound threat to the industry ... Hays knew that their impact on public opinion would hold “infinitely more danger than any report the Federal Council might have issued.””⁹⁹ Jowett *et al*'s examination of the Payne Fund Studies, however, convincingly disputes the notion that the MPRC were themselves in favour of federal censorship. They quote from an article by Rev. Short in the October 1934 issue of *Education*, in which he lists five campaigning goals, one of which is “the separation of child and adult audiences” and another of which is “movies as a free art, with no censorship or monopoly”. Jowett *et al* argue that Short was against federal censorship, as this suggests, seeing it as a monopolistic practice, and instead

favoured the creation of separate films for children and for adult audiences. However, they also point out that the MPRC's position on federal censorship was the subject of great controversy within the organisation itself, with many members individually in favour of federal regulation. This said, as Jowett *et al* acknowledge, the MPRC's own position on the subject remains a more minor point as so much of the censorship campaign was in favour of federal censorship, and the *Studies* and *Our Movie Made Children* both gave them ammunition and helped tip public opinion towards them.¹⁰⁰

At the lowest financial ebb of the Depression, in the uncertain months before Roosevelt's inauguration, the censorship crisis intensified, and the film industry was placed under further pressure by speculation that Roosevelt's proposals for government control of industry would include some kind of federal film censorship.¹⁰¹ The MPPDA responded to these anxieties with a "Reaffirmation of Objectives" confirming the Code and further tightening the SRC's application of it.¹⁰² However, this in turn was not enough to prevent a large and highly-publicised Catholic campaign in 1934 which forced the censorship controversy to a crisis point, prompting the MPPDA to a further and more radical reform of Code administration.

Modern film historians disagree on the nature and import of the campaign by the Catholic Legion of Decency, as I discuss in more detail in Chapter One. While it depicted itself as grassroots campaign forcing a financial crisis within the industry and a wholesale reform of the supposedly ineffectual SRC, more recent work has questioned this account. Lea Jacobs has suggested that the importance of the Catholic campaign's contribution may have been overplayed relative to those of other censorship groups. Meanwhile, she, Richard Maltby and Ruth Vasey have all argued convincingly that while the campaign was crucial, it was not so much a spontaneous popular movement as an orchestrated attempt by prominent Catholics, including several of the Code's architects, to push Will Hays and the MPPDA towards a stricter and more comprehensive enforcement of the Code.¹⁰³

Correspondence from 1933 shows that Joseph Breen, at the time working part-time for the SRC, in active discussion with Quigley, Bishop Cantwell of Los Angeles, Daniel Lord and others on campaign strategy.¹⁰⁴ The *Motion Picture Herald* of 1933 and early 1934 was full of criticism from Quigley that the Code was being ignored. The Catholic youth magazine which Father Lord edited, *The Queen's Work*, carried in Catholic schools and

colleges, started printing lists of suitable and unsuitable pictures.¹⁰⁵ At the bishops' conference in Washington, November 1933, Daniel Lord lamented the dashing of his and Quigley's hopes for the Code. At the same conference, Cantwell, in a speech written for him by Joseph Breen, spoke angrily of the Jews, "instruments of debauchery" who dominated Hollywood production, of the "seventy-five percent pagan" actors and filmmakers, and of New York City's exportation of its "European climate", dubious morals and pornographic writing westwards.¹⁰⁶ An Episcopal Committee on Motion Pictures was convened at the same conference, chaired by Archbishop McNicholas of Cincinnati, advised by Wilfrid Parsons, editor of the Jesuit magazine *America*, who was in turn advised by Quigley and Breen. The plan was for "ethical leadership by the bishops based on concerted action by the rank and file" – in other words, an organised nationwide campaign by the Catholic Church, designed with a careful eye to publicity.¹⁰⁷

By early 1934, this had taken the form of the recruitment of the Catholic Legion of Decency, which persuaded Catholics to sign a pledge promising "to remain away from all motion pictures except those which do not offend decency and Christian morality."¹⁰⁸ The largest actual boycott was in Philadelphia, where Cardinal Denis Dougherty of instructed all Philadelphia Catholics in *Catholic Standard*, May 25, 1934 to "stay away from all of [the movies] ... This is not merely a counsel but a positive command, binding all in conscience under pain of sin."¹⁰⁹ This was reported to cause a dramatic drop in box office receipts in the city – 40% in three months. In Chicago, meanwhile, the heavily Catholic state censorship board banned more and more films, including prestige productions like *Queen Christina*. Uncoordinated, localised campaigns were also beginning to be effective. Parochial school children paraded outside designated theatres with placards reading "An Admission to an Indecent Movie Is a Ticket to Hell".¹¹⁰ Parish priests were reputedly stationed outside box offices to check their flock were sticking to their word. This campaign, reported widely in the press, operated in tandem with pressure from above, from the film industry's financial backers to remodel and strengthen the MPPDA's internal censorship procedures. De Grazia and Newman argue that the same players who organised the Legion of Decency campaign worked at the same time to encourage Hollywood's major investors to make just such a stipulation.¹¹¹

While other factors – particularly the Payne Fund Studies and the media attention given to them and to *Our Movie Made Children* – undoubtedly intensified the crisis, the breadth and influence of the Legion of Decency campaign, and the Philadelphia boycott in

particular, is undeniable. Maltby convincingly suggests that this was more to do with the amount of negative publicity and press attention it generated than with its immediate financial effect on the industry.¹¹² At any rate, the MPPDA responded rapidly, holding an emergency meeting of the Board which reconstituted the SRC as the Production Code Administration, to be headed by Breen with an expanded staff which could monitor films more closely at all stages of development.

New measures gave the newly-formed PCA rather more substantial power than its predecessor. Firstly, every film passed by the PCA would be given a certificate to be displayed on each print, and a \$25, 000 fine could now be levied against any MPPDA member company releasing a film without it. A second rule reinforced the first: no member-controlled theatre circuit was permitted to book an uncertificated film. Additionally, the "Hollywood Jury" was scrapped.¹¹³ Appeals against Code office decisions had to go before the full board of MPPDA directors in New York, a move which shifted power from the studio heads to their financial backers. A. P. Giannini, President of the Bank of America and one of the most powerful financiers of the industry, declared that no film would receive funding without prior clearance from the Production Code Administration.¹¹⁴ However, the PCA's methodology of censorship negotiation remained substantially similar to its predecessor, albeit generally more thorough and stringent. PCA censorship remained primarily based in consensual negotiations with filmmakers, rather than resort to the PCA's powers to refuse a certificate.¹¹⁵

After this crisis, the moral panic regarding cinema censorship gradually declined, and public opinion relaxed. By the late 1930s and the end of the 1930s horror cycle, Production Code censorship negotiation was fully integrated into Hollywood filmmaking.¹¹⁶ As the moral conservative campaign died down, the debate over cinema censorship moved on from the issue of federal censorship. The dominant issue in censorship had now become overtly political content, and particularly anti-Fascist material such as several Spanish Civil War films, Sinclair Lewis' *It Can't Happen Here*, a satire in which an unscrupulous American senator uses the 1936 Presidential election to make himself a dictator in the mould of Hitler. Such material was repeatedly charged by both the PCA and conservatives with being pro-Communist or pro-Democrat propaganda, and therefore unsuitable as 'harmless entertainments'. Greater debates over cinema censorship were now largely concerned with the limits of the Production Code's power to forbid explicitly political argument in a film, rather than with the social

effects of sex, violence and horror.¹¹⁷ Crucially, this meant that when horror production resumed in 1939, it did so in a changed censorship climate in which, whatever the Production Code's policy on the matter, horror was far less central to the current censorship debate.

The horror films of the 1931-1936 cycle were therefore informed by an unstable and rapidly evolving censorship situation. Internal censorship had to keep pace with the growth of external censorship and anti-cinema campaigning, which had become a major threat to the film industry at a time when it was under great financial strain. Most importantly, censorship during the 1930s horror cycle was in a period of controversy and transformation, and came from multiple sources with radically different interests in and conception of cinema and spectatorship.

Chapter One: Review of literature

The aim of this chapter is both to locate my work in terms of the fields with which it intersects, and to offer specific interventions into some key theoretical and methodological debates in each of those fields. After locating my work and the fields I will discuss more closely within a brief history of horror studies, this chapter engages in debate upon three topics: genre studies, historiography and the study of horror affect.

In reference to genre studies, I discuss recent developments in this area that have informed my study, historical trends in the way horror scholarship specifically tends to construct genre. My own approach is intended to apply these recent developments to the study of the 1930s horror cycle, but also aims to supplement Rick Altman's model of genrification by examining the role of censorship in genre-making.

This chapter also discusses several historiographical issues around explanation of the horror cycle in terms of broad historical trends, around censorship, and around the historical borders of the cycle. I define my own position in reference to the first and last of these issues, and I argue that my work applies recent developments in classical Hollywood censorship scholarship to the 1930s horror cycle.

Finally, this chapter discusses the notion of "discourses of affect", as initially delineated by Matt Hills, and how this notion offers a useful route for the historical scholar in negotiating the methodological dilemmas involved in studying both affect and spectatorship.

1.1 A brief history of horror studies

In this section it is my intention to offer some wider context for how my own study fits into the 'map' of horror studies, before I move on to a closer discussion of the parts of the field with which my own work most intersects. This being the case, this survey is intended to be brief, and does not aim to be truly comprehensive. I should also note that,

as I will further explore in 1.2, recent developments in genre studies have questioned whether horror is the unproblematically pre-defined object of study that much of this work takes it to be.

As my thesis will discuss throughout, there was critical discussion of horror films in the popular media from the beginnings of the 1930s cycle. However, academic film criticism of horror began to appear in the 1960s, emerging in the wake of pioneering examinations of other popular film genres such as the Western and the gangster film.¹ Perhaps the most seminal piece of horror scholarship from this early period, though, is Robin Wood's essay "American Nightmare: Horror in the 70s" (1986).² Drawing on primarily on psychoanalytic theory and secondarily on Marxist theory, Wood analyses the cultural and ideological work of the 1970s horror film. He argues influentially that horror represents "return of the repressed" from the cultural 'unconscious', and argues that the short taxonomy of American filmic monsters he embarks on reveals a spectrum of that which modern capitalist society represses in terms of gender, sexuality, politics, race and class. Another purpose of Wood's work, and the 1970s and 1980s horror scholars who followed him, is to validate horror as an object of study by asserting its cultural and political relevance.

Wood's work has given rise to an entire branch of horror studies that seeks to analyse and interpret horror's ideological underpinnings. Such work usually relies, like Wood, on a psychoanalytic narrative, although this is occasionally implicit. In particular, many particularly strong and influential narratives of the politics of the horror film have focused on gender and drawn on feminist psychoanalytic film theory (particularly Laura Mulvey's work on the gaze) and semiotics (particularly Julia Kristeva's work on abjection).³ One prominent example, Barbara Creed's *The Monstrous-Feminine* (1993) uses horror film texts as instances to argue that in all its forms monstrosity is a refraction of male fears of the female body.

Some other discussions of horror in the same period, like S.S. Prawer's history *Caligari's Children* (1980) concentrated on an aesthetic analysis and appreciation of the horror genre. As I will suggest in 1.2, these studies frequently relied on structuralist accounts of genre, and were often preoccupied with issues of generic definition around an agreed centre.

Horror studies has expanded exponentially in the last two decades, to the point where at the time of writing it appears to be one of the most active areas in the field of genre studies. This increase in popularity in the academy has been interdependent with the growth of genre studies as such, as I will discuss in 1.2. It has also coincided with a decline in the popularity within the academy of the kinds of film theory which formed the basis for much of the horror studies of the 1970s.⁴ However, this said, numerous critics of the last two decades, for instance Halberstam (1995), Bellin (2005) and Newitz (2006), continue to draw on psychoanalytical and Marxist approaches to draw out the ideological dynamics of horror, and illustrate that such approaches to horror continue to be a lively part of the field.

'Post-theory' perspectives in the wider academy have led some scholars formulate alternative ways of analysing horror which draw on other bodies of scholarship. Noël Carroll's cognitivist account of horror, *The Philosophy of Horror*, which I discuss in 1.4, argues that psychoanalytic theory is limited in its capacity to address horror spectatorship as an emotional experience and offers an alternative, cognitive model of horror affect. Alternatively, a number of scholars in the last two decades have taken a more historicist approach to the genre. There has been a particular trend in the last decade towards investigating horror spectatorship by examining practices, trends and discourses in marketing, distribution, consumption, and fandom. I will discuss some of these studies in 1.3 and 1.4.

It is within this latter trend towards industrial history and studies of reception that I would broadly locate my own work. However, as I will elaborate below, my account focuses on the conversation through which different genre users, such as censors or studio publicity, constructed of horror's affect and effect on spectators. My thesis therefore intersects to some degree with scholarship on horror affect. In section 1.4, I will argue for the value of such an approach as my own and suggest how it might make a contribution to the field.

1.2 Horror scholarship and recent trends in genre studies

This section examines and critiques the range of existing approaches to genre in horror scholarship. Back in the earlier days of film studies as an academic discipline, the *auteur* theory and its proponents defined genres as less an object of interest in themselves than as the formulae which true cinematic art transcended.⁵ However, over the past few decades, genres themselves have increased in popularity as an object of critical attention. In both the study of particular genres, and theorisation about genre in general, various methods have been proposed by which critics might identify, investigate and work with film genres.

In particular, the discussion in this section arises from a trend in recent work by genre scholars such as Rick Altman (most prominently in *Film/Genre*), Jim Naremore (in *More Than Night: Film Noir and its Contexts* and various articles) and Steve Neale (in *Genre and Hollywood*) to argue for a break with a number of widespread critical assumptions and methods. I wish broadly to align my own work with such scholarship, and argue the need for more work in horror studies in particular to respond to and take account of this trend. I also argue in more detail in section 1.2.2. that certain aspects of the discussion in this thesis can extend and nuance some of the preceding authors' propositions about genre-making in classical Hollywood.

1.2.2 Constructing horror as genre

Horror studies itself is as often marked by implicit, undiscussed assumptions about genre in general as it is by specific discussions and propositions concerning genre. In particular, the theoretical issues to be negotiated concerning the generic history of horror and the definition of horror itself as a generic category are very often treated by implication only. Explicit re-examination of the question of genre means we can begin to test these assumptions.

At this point I want to offer a brief analysis of several of the most common ways in which horror scholarship has treated the question of genre. I do this in order to suggest why the programme proposed by Altman, Neale and others is valuable to horror studies, and

might be able to help substantially revise our understanding of horror's many historical and cultural iterations, and even its very nature as a genre. This analysis is necessarily brief, and not intended as part of an exhaustive taxonomy of horror scholarship, but to highlight certain trends and areas of debate around questions of genre which are particularly relevant to this thesis.

The first tendency I want to note first appears historically early on in horror studies, peaked during the 1980s and continues to be relatively prominent, despite some decline of scholarly interest in the theories upon which it is founded. In this mode of horror analysis, conclusions about the genre are arrived at following the close analysis of a relatively small number of case studies of 'classic' instances. Robin Wood's seminal essay "The American Nightmare: Horror in the 70s" (1986), Barbara Creed's *The Monstrous-Feminine* (1993) and Bruce Kavin's 1984 essay "The Mummy's Pool" all exemplify this trend.⁶ Altman and Mark Jancovich have both noted that the conclusions of such studies about horror tend to ascribe it a basic 'core' of meaning, and either a ritual or an ideological function, depending on whether the scholar in question is working from a structuralist or a post-structuralist standpoint.⁷ Such studies seek to make observations about horror which pertain throughout a wide range of films, or which are even argued to be essential to the genre, yet the number of actual films studied in detail is usually small, and the historical range relatively broad. Creed's study, for instance, is based on an in-depth examination of eight films from a twenty-year production period. This is, again, concomitant with the notion that this essential 'core' of meaning or function, since it is basic to the genre, is best elucidated through close analysis of a few films.

This leads to two related problems. Firstly, the issue of selection is clearly important given the design of such studies, but is underdiscussed and frequently remains implicit throughout. As with the Wood and Creed works above, introductory portions where this subject might have been discussed are instead devoted to elucidating the theory which these films will be used to prove. Secondly, the reductive properties of ascribing shared 'core' meaning and function to a broad range of horror films are dealt with through the elision of films which might challenge or pose problems for the theory in question. Moreover, sometimes films appear to be selected precisely *for* the fact that they resonate with the theory being propounded. For instance, Barbara Creed, in arguing that filmic monstrosity is really about the abjection of the female genitalia, foregrounds *Carrie*

(1976), in which the menarche triggers an explosion of monstrosity in the adolescent female protagonist, but ignores, for instance, *American Werewolf in London* (1981), and its not-unprecedented connection between *male* adolescence and monstrosity.⁸

Another kind of study of horror, especially in the last two decades, attempts to grapple with this issue of selectivity and range by producing taxonomies which attempt to map the territory of the horror genre according to various criteria. Andrew Tudor's *Monsters and Mad Scientists* (1989) classifies horror films in their period of production, from 1931-1984, and according to the nature of the main threat: supernatural or scientific, internal or external. David J. Russell's "Monster Roundup: Reintegrating the Horror Genre" (1998) does not classify films historically, but also divides films into categories based upon the nature of the monster, represented as overlapping in a Venn diagram: deviant, paranatural, and supernatural.⁹ W.H. Rockett's *Devouring Whirlwind* (1988), meanwhile, divides horror into thematic subgenres: supranatural, supernatural, bad science, and slasher. Importantly, such taxonomies, like the former kind of study, analyse genre only with reference to the film text, and are not concerned with genre classification and use in production, marketing, or spectatorship.

This tendency is in some ways a useful development. Andrew Tudor's study is particularly actively engaged with the problem of studying horror as genre, arguing that his approach attempts to deal non-reductively with the variety and plurality of horror films, noting that "a genre's boundaries are definitionally blurred", and attempting to recognise and chart the fact that the genre has been subject to much change and development.¹⁰ Unlike the former approach to studying horror, this mode of analysis does not assume either that horror occupies a large but undifferentiated territory. It is also far more likely than the former approach to deal with variation and even contradiction within the genre, partly by nature and partly because in such studies the taxonomy itself is the proposition, which means the scholar can be less committed to the discovery of a single meaning or function which pertains widely.

However, these kinds of taxonomy are subject to certain problems. Chiefly, it is difficult for them to avoid becoming somewhat arbitrary: how has the critic determined which qualities of a genre are the important ones, by which it ought to be classified? In order to give significance to a system of classification that has nothing to do with the way films are produced, distributed, censored and consumed outside of academia, one must have

a critical standpoint, even an agenda. The critical purpose in such studies by definition tends to be covert and de-emphasised in order to preserve the notion that the taxonomy is objective. This is a problematic contradiction in itself. For instance, Russell describes himself as part of a school of "objectivist horror analysis" and cites "a general agreement among most horror critics" (including Tudor) that, in Tudor's phrase "the 'threat' is the central feature of the horror movie narrative."¹¹ Again, the terms of analysis are chosen only with reference to the kinds of patterns the critic wishes to observe, and of course themselves determine what will then appear to be the 'landmarks' of horror's topography: for example, Tudor's observation that 1950s horror is distinguished by the preponderance of scientific threats over supernatural ones.¹² A topography which focused instead on the temporal and geographical *settings* of horror films would be likely to discover a different set of 'landmarks' for 1950s horror. With the claim of objectivity and empirical study compromised, and no explicit theoretical purpose or point, the use-value of the taxonomy is somewhat devalued.

In fact, an overt critical agenda like, for instance, a hypothetical feminist analysis which surveyed horror films by the presence, nature and plot role of female characters, would arguably be able to achieve more despite the compromise of its claims to complete objectivity. Studies of horror which approach its genre from other angles sometimes also offer looser and more explicitly motivated taxonomies, such as Robin Wood's "The American Nightmare", mentioned above (by type of repressed/Other embodied by the monster: female sexuality, proletariat, other cultures, etc.) and Rhona Berenstein's historical-theoretical study of marketing and spectatorship *Attack of the Leading Ladies*, which I discuss below (hypnosis films, jungle-horror and mad doctor films). While these remain subject to the problem of critical circularity discussed above, their much less pronounced claim of objectivity, and their motivation by the theoretical points of the study allow them to escape to some degree the related problem of arbitrariness.

A third scholarly approach to horror as genre shifts the location of genre, and sometimes the object of analysis itself, from the film text itself to the contexts in which it is produced and consumed. Such studies are therefore historically oriented, and their relative popularity at time of writing is probably not unconnected with the rise of historicism within literature and film studies. Rhona Berenstein's *Attack of the Leading Ladies* (1996) examines archival material related to marketing and censorship to gain a sense of the place of gender in how these sources invited audience members to watch horror films.

Matt Hills' *The Pleasures of Horror* (2005), meanwhile, is a broad-ranging examination of some of the discursive practices and cultural politics of horror audiences. Steffen Hantke's anthology *Horror Film: Creating and Marketing Fear* (2004) emphasises horror marketing in a way indicative of the recent growth of this trend. I will discuss the Hills and Berenstein texts in more depth with reference to my own work in sections 1.3 and 1.4. Some such studies are interested in the activity of concrete, rather than theorised, horror audiences, and particularly in horror fandom and the body of fan-produced criticism and debate, with its lively disputes: for instance, Martin Barker's *The Video Nasties* and several recent articles by Mark Jancovich.¹³

Recent work on horror which actively considers and responds to recent developments in genre studies and the work of Altman tends to fall within this category: for example, the Jancovich articles and Hills' *The Pleasures of Horror*. Much recent work on horror, however, does not consider such developments at all. Reynold Humphries' *The American Horror Film: An Introduction* (2002) offers a typical case-study based account of the 'meaning' of American horror. Russell's "Monster Roundup", meanwhile, dismisses recent developments in genre studies as "a widespread critical indifference to and suspicion of a working definition of a genre as if a consistent critical vocabulary might be, somehow, a bad thing". He notes that such work problematises his own study only to dismiss it as rendering its adherents "disabled as genre critics" unable to make the "objectivist" distinctions of his own work.¹⁴ However, unfortunately, he never engages substantially with the critique he notes such developments offer of his own approach.

With particular regard to this thesis, I wish to point out that although classical Hollywood has been the pre-eminent focus of the new wave of genre studies, little has been written on the 1930s horror cycle which tackles it with respect to these developments. I discuss existing contributions to the field, such as Berenstein's work, in more depth in 1.3.

As I have suggested above, problems of definition, which are often undiscussed, and in particular the assumption that which films are and are not horror is obvious to all, have been perennial within horror studies. The issue here is not only this assumption itself but also frequently the accompanying sense that where horror is located in a film and how it operates is also obvious and agreed rather than disputed. My thesis shows that even in the original production, distribution, censorship and reception conditions of the first horror cycle, various wildly disparate models of horror existed, competed and were struggled

over – for instance, the SRC's definition of horror in a film was not recognised or agreed on with either local censorship boards, reviewers or consumers – and this gap of understanding made it very difficult for them to exercise the control they desired over horror and the cycle.

Some recent developments in genre scholarship have analysed how the traditional projects of genre studies have been invested in the idea of consensus, agreed definitions and stable identities for genres, and critiqued why this means so many scholars have made such broad explanation of an entire genre a priority. In recent years, several major studies, most prominently Rick Altman's *Film/Genre* (1999), James Naremore's *More Than Night: Film Noir in its Contexts* (1998) and Steve Neale's *Genre and Hollywood* (1999), in which Neale substantially revises his earlier work on the subject, have argued convincingly for a revision of previous approaches to the subject. This trend in genre scholarship has challenged the field to examine the subject in a new way which seeks to understand genre as less a fixed, transhistorical category than a constant and frequently contentious historical process.

Altman, Neale, and Naremore in particular have critiqued the essentialism and circular logic of definitions of genre that rely solely or largely on an essential 'core' of generic identity, which is either reliably transhistorical or which it develops towards and afterwards declines away from. One of Altman's most prominent criticisms of traditional genre studies concerns the prevalence of such essentialism, the assumption underpinning most genre scholarship that, as he puts it, "genres have clear, stable identities and borders." He argues that film history challenges this assumption at every turn, yet it persists in film genre studies as they are invested in "generic purity", produce genres as stable and predictable objects of study.¹⁵

By contrast, Altman and others argue that genres are neither objective nor transhistorical, but "a multi-dimensional phenomenon"¹⁶, as Neale puts it. Rather than transhistorical, genres are constantly in historical process. Rather than identified by consensus, their definitions and territories are constantly disputed by different groups of genre users with their own interest. One aim of this trend in scholarship has therefore been to attempt, with some success, to shift discussion of genres away from transhistorical studies and the examination of films abstracted from context, and towards examination of the specific sites, historical moments and contexts in which films are

produced, promoted, mediated, and consumed. In particular, both Neale and Altman have argued for more attention within studies of classical Hollywood genre to film cycles and to the flexible and pragmatic way in which studios make use of genre within them.¹⁷

Altman provides a particularly full and useful model of this process, which has informed my own examination of the 1930s horror cycle. The process of genrification, as Altman calls it, is based upon the founding observation that studios and producers are forward-looking, predicting and creating trends by constantly revising their ideas of what interests film consumers according to the most recent film successes and failures.¹⁸ Therefore, fully formed, predictable and stable genres actually work *against* studios' economic interests. Analysis of studios' genre use reveals, he argues, that they constantly sought fresh angles and struggled to differentiate their products from those of other studios. Therefore in both modern and classical Hollywood production, Altman observes, their "stock-in-trade is the romantic combination of genres, not the classical practice of generic purity." Studios also prefer "cycles (which are proprietary) to genres (which are sharable)".¹⁹

Genrification begins, in Altman's model, with a studio's imitation of its biggest box office hits, hoping to create a film cycle which will furnish a "successful, easily exploitable [model] associated with a single studio."²⁰ So *Dracula's* box office success prompted Universal to immediately commission two new films, *Frankenstein* and *Murders on the Rue Morgue*, which attempted to model and repeat some of the former film's success. New cycles generally associate new material or a new approach with an established type of film. As I discuss in Chapter Two, the first few films of the horror cycle, including *Dracula*, were marketed as a new kind of mystery thriller. Favourable conditions, Altman argues, cause single-studio cycles to be recognised and imitated throughout the industry, leading to a cycle becoming a standardised genre. The horror cycle, as I will argue later in this section, broadly follows this part of Altman's genrification process, but with an important difference of timescale – other studios produced horror films almost immediately after *Dracula's* release, for reasons which mean certain conditions must be added to Altman's generally logical and convincing single-studio cycle rule.

After a genre has been standardised and becomes industry-wide, Altman argues, "individual studios have no further economic interest in practising it as such (especially in their prestige productions); instead, they seek to create new cycles by associating a new

type of material or approach with an existing genre, thus initiating a new round of genrification.”²¹ While the 1930s horror cycle, as a multi-studio cycle, to some extent defies this trend, I chart in Chapter Five how it can be seen powerfully at work in horror from 1939 onwards. The box office success of *Son of Frankenstein*, and the new horror censorship conditions it heralded, coupled with a widespread trade perception of horror as predictable and over-standardised, lead to an impressive fragmentation and hybridisation of horror with other disparate kinds of films like comedy, historical melodrama, and musicals, leading, among other developments, to a number of distinct single-studio cycles.

Crucially, this mode of research asks genre scholars to have different priorities and methodologies when seeking material. One result of this movement within genre studies has been to encourage smaller scale historical studies which examine particular contexts in which genres are used in detail, and attempt to discourage dependence on grand transhistorical claims which pertain across genres. Scholarship and research in the former mode requires more attention and sensitivity to ways in which production material, studio marketing and the trade and mainstream press uses genre terms. This recovery of the vocabulary used by producers, marketing and consumers is worthwhile, it is argued, because that of traditional genre criticism is retrospective in nature – imposed by critics after the fact - and therefore often does not adequately convey the needs and priorities of genre users at the time.²²

Careful examination of where and how this vocabulary was deployed often yields insights which radically revise what we as film scholars believe about how films were marketed and consumed at the time of release, and the ways in which genre terms were used. This is particularly useful because genre vocabulary is not stable and fixed, but pragmatic, constantly changing through use, and frequently disputed.²³ The evidence this thesis has found supports this contention: particularly the evolution of the term “horror” during the 1930s cycle, which I particularly treat in Chapter Two, and the disputes around the term I chart in Chapters Three and Four.

A number of scholars have re-examined individual genres in this spirit. For instance, James Naremore has made apposite use of contemporary discussion of the 1940s thrillers critics now know as *film noir*, and shown that they were not categorised as such, or grouped together as such, until post-war French film criticism produced the term.²⁴ In

a similar vein, Steve Neale has shown how trade press use of the term “melodrama” in the classical Hollywood period almost never denotes the specific definition used by critics, associated with discussion of the “women’s film”. Instead it is a broader, looser term used to describe various crime, mystery and horror films.²⁵

Another important contention of both Neale and Altman is that genres, and specifically Hollywood genres, are provisional and multiple, rather than essential. Altman in particular stresses that even specific cultural moments and sites where genres are produced and received tend to be the subject of contest and dispute. He asserts that “genres must be seen as a site of struggle among users” because those different users – producers, studio marketing, trade and mainstream press, audiences and censors – all had different, sometimes clashing interests in genre.²⁶ He argues that scholarship on film genres has tended to elide such disputes in favour of a non-existent consensus. Neale, however, argues that, although genre cannot be seen as coherent, the critic must beware of “[collapsing] the distinction between those instances which are relatively formulaic, relatively predictable, relatively conventional, and those which are not.”²⁷

Altman and Neale’s disagreement upon this point is particularly apparent with regard to the subject of *how* classical Hollywood marketing tended to use genre. Neale contends that one of the purposes of studio marketing was to signal genre in a manner he characterises as clear and straightforward:

The indication and circulation of what the industry considers to be the generic framework – or frameworks – most appropriate to the viewing of a film is therefore one of the most important functions performed by advertising copy, and by posters, stills and trailers ... posters and trailers often offer verbal generic description – ‘The Greatest War Picture Ever Made’, ‘The Comedy of the Decade’, ‘The Drama of the Year’, and so on ...²⁸

Altman, however, challenges the idea, which he observes to be widespread in genre scholarship, that studio marketing, especially in classical Hollywood, regularly identifies films with a single genre in order to sell particular generic pleasures.

He claims that his extensive examination of classical Hollywood marketing has shown it *almost never* uses a singular genre terms or appeals to singular genre pleasures. Instead, studios “invariably” use genre terms in adjective/noun pairs, thus guaranteeing appeal to both sexes: Western romance, romantic adventure ...²⁹ Another common marketing strategy he has observed is even more antithetical to what genre scholars

have tended to believe: advertising which contains *no genre information at all*, saying as little as possible about the film while stressing it would be supremely entertaining.³⁰ The intention appears to have been to create mystery and interest to as broad an audience as possible. As I discuss in Chapter Two, one strand (but not all strands) of *Dracula's* marketing followed this line, emphasising that it was a “sensationally different” film which “everyone will soon be talking about”, but carefully avoiding more specific associations.³¹ This strategy is particularly understandable for a high-budget prestige film like *Dracula*, which a studio would want to market as widely as possible.

1.2.2 Some notes on Altman's model of genrification

I have drawn upon Altman's impressive and perceptive model of the multi-stage process of genre-making (from cycle to genre to cycle) extensively in my analysis of the horror cycle. However, I have found several details of the horror cycle's process of genrification to differ from that which Altman describes. In particular, there is one player in the classical Hollywood genre-making and genre-using game Altman somewhat neglects: censorship. It is not my intention here to criticise Altman's scholarship; in such a broad-ranging analysis, some under-representation is almost inevitable. The discussion I offer here of how the particular behaviour of the horror cycle might modify some aspects of Altman's genrification model is therefore intended to extend and enrich that model, rather than to criticise it more broadly.

In this thesis I hope to demonstrate, via the example of the horror cycle, something of the contributions various censorship bodies made and the disputes they generated and intervened in within the process of classical Hollywood genre-making. I hope to demonstrate how a fuller consideration of the role of censorship and cinema campaigning can add to our understanding of classical Hollywood genre in process.

In this section, I argue that the horror cycle calls for modifications to Altman's model on two fronts. First, I argue that the particular, unique interests and influences of censorship bodies in genre deserve a fuller consideration. Second, I examine two aspects of horror's genrification which make it anomalous with respect to Altman's model, its status as a

multi-studio cycle and its studio marketing. I argue that horror's relative controversy as a cycle and in particular, its place within the censorship discussion can offer at least a partial explanation for these anomalies.

Altman does briefly and usefully consider the roles censorship might play in genre-making briefly later on in *Film/Genre*, although with reference to the post-classical ratings system in the United Kingdom and USA, and the British 1980s 'video nasty' debate. Here Altman considers how censors might have radically different interests in genre to studios, and deploy various tools like the ratings system to attempt to exert some control over genre grouping, "to funnel production into clearly separate categories".³² In a short discussion of the 1980s 'video nasty' controversy, Altman shows how the 1984 Video Recordings Bill, by introducing compulsory rating of video recordings on sale in the United Kingdom, reflected the interests of a censorship campaign upon the issue. It concretised the negative media description 'video nasty' by clearly demarcating such films and regulating the way in which they were distributed, consumed and even read.³³ Altman gives as an example Martin Barker's analysis of the British reception of the American TV film *The Day After* (1983), conceived as a political social problem film about the nuclear threat, but consumed in the UK as a horror film after being labelled a 'video nasty'. Barker and Altman suggest that the 'video nasty' genre label, as defined and promoted by censorship campaigners, invited spectators to appreciate *The Day After*'s scenes of violence and gruesomeness, but simultaneously drew attention away from its political message.³⁴ Leaving aside the problem of whether or not British spectators of *The Day After* would accept this invitation to be less politically engaged, or might have, like Barker, read 'video nasties' in ways which challenged the label, this is a cogent observation on the interests of censorship in genre, which can be very usefully developed in reference to 1930s film censorship.

In this thesis, and Chapters Three and Four in particular, I argue that the various bodies involved in classical Hollywood censorship also constituted a distinct group of genre users with their own interests, and aim to examine how these bodies constructed and used horror. In this 'Censor's Game', censorship bodies internal, independent and local analysed and deployed genre and cycle groupings in order to attempt to contain more strictly kinds of film they judged problematic. Unlike the studios, who were interested in the proliferation, mixing and continual 'freshening' of generic categories and cycles, the PCA and other censorship bodies wished to delimit and regulate problematic cycles like

the horror cycle. Censors' different interests led them to a different method of assessing generic identity, attributing existing generic labels like horror to a film on the grounds of a its possession, in their eyes, of certain problematic qualities. They were interested in applying these labels, as I have said, in order to control problematic kinds of film more strictly, and their process of definition was sometimes intended to end not in a production category, but in its opposite, the *removal* of certain kinds of film from production.

In my analysis of censorship in these chapters I focus on a particular aspect of this struggle. Instead of exploring how the SRC, PCA or other censorship bodies might have come up with a different list of horror cycle films from Universal, or *Variety*, I focus upon analysing how their construction and definition of horror differed *qualitatively* from those of these other groups of genre users. I examine what was at stake in this analysis and what kind of notion of horror's affect and effects it produced. Most importantly, I analyse how this notion competed with both other models of horror, since different censorship bodies' constructions of horror differed, and with censorship models of horror differed even more radically from the ways in which studio marketing and the trade press discussed horror films.

As I mentioned above, the 1930s horror cycle challenges two aspects of Altman's model of genrification. First, while Altman makes a great distinction between the single-studio cycle and the industry-wide standardised genre as stages of the genrification process, the 1930s horror cycle was consistently associated with multiple studios. Second, Altman argues that classical Hollywood marketing tended to underplay genre, and *always* associated a film with multiple categories to broaden its appeal. While 1930s horror marketing frequently advertises two fronts of appeal, most frequently horror/romance, it also frequently uses horror angles and terms alone. Again, given the breadth of Altman's analysis and the territory of classical Hollywood production, some variation in the way cycles and genre terms develop and fragment should not be surprising. However, as I will argue, the case of the horror cycle appears to call for specific consideration of the role of censorship, rather than wholesale revision of Altman's model.

First, Altman suggests that film genre categories begin with single-studio cycles and progress to industry-wide, standardised genres. The distinction is for him an important one since he argues that the process is propelled by the need for studios to distinguish their products and single-studio cycles offer "successful, easily exploitable models

associated with a single studio"³⁵. Once other studios have adopted an in-house cycle, the standardised genre has reached a "saturation point" which means studios "must either abandon it, restrict it to 'B' productions, or handle it in a new way". In the latter strategy, the game begins again, with one or more new studio-specific cycles with new genre ingredients added.³⁶ Although Universal produced and marketed many more horror films than other studios, the 1930s horror cycle was never single-studio. Even before the release of *Frankenstein* confirmed the cycle, other studios had put horror films into production. From the release of Paramount's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* in late 1931, other studios produced and marketed enough films as part of the horror cycle for it to be difficult to support any contention that horror was a studio-specific cycle.

The rapidity with which other studios got in on the horror act is explicated somewhat by various statements in the trade press following the huge box-office success of *Dracula* and *Frankenstein*. Various trade press reviews of Paramount's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* treat it as an entry in a short-lived, multi-studio horror cycle. *Motion Picture Herald* calls it "a distinctive contribution to the present cycle of "horror" thrillers which seems to be upon us."³⁷, while *Variety* comments that "this time-tested horror tale ... falls into a strong spot during a popular vogue for this story type."³⁸ and a third journal notes that "following the astonishing success of *Frankenstein*, Hollywood has taken up horror in a big way."³⁹ In February 1932, *Motion Picture Herald* commented similarly of the low budget independent feature *The Monster Walks*:

Action Pictures offers its own contribution to the group of "horror" films *now holding the stage temporarily*. [italics mine]⁴⁰

Comments like these strongly suggest that the horror cycle was expected, like so many cycles, to be a short-lived fad, whose intensity should be ridden out while it lasted. It would have made short-term economic sense for a studio to invest in a horror cycle film or two, especially given the harsh conditions and need for rapid profits the film industry was experiencing in the early Thirties. If the fashionable horror angle could be prudently combined with a more proven and studio-specific genre marketing angle, all the better. For instance, Warner's *Doctor X* (1932) combined its horror angle with a mystery-thriller plot and added a fast-talking journalist hero.

Considering the question from another angle, we might ask why marketing and reviewing drew so many of these follow-up films into the horror cycle, rather than regarding them

as distinct studio products which might even form part of another cycle originating from *Dracula* and *Frankenstein*? I wish to argue that examining the ways in which horror's marketing is unusual or anomalous can help provide an explanation.

Films in the horror cycle were marketed with much more prominent mention of affective horror itself as an attraction than Altman suggests was usual for film marketing and genre. As I have discussed above, Altman has usefully explored how studio publicity "prefers to imply generic affiliation indirectly, with at least two generic connections invariably implied."⁴¹

The lure of horror affect was consistently a key marketing angle for horror cycle films, and very often used in isolation by a good proportion of a film's advertising. For instance, an examination of the thirty-five suggested tag-lines in the press book for *Mad Love* (MGM, 1936) shows that eighteen of them balanced romantic elements with horror in the manner Altman describes as typical ("THE THING" demanded – love"), while fourteen offered horror alone ("Dead hands that live, and kill!"), and three de-emphasised genre or touted Peter Lorre's American film debut.⁴² I therefore wish to note the prominence of horror angles and the fact that they sometimes appear alone, but do not wish to imply that it was not frequent for horror marketing to combine several angles or emphasise other genre pleasures, especially romance, as well. For instance, Rhona Berenstein, whose work I discuss in section 1.3, has perceptively examined the marketing of the 1930s horror cycle to female consumers, and the use of romance angles in horror film marketing.⁴³

In Chapter Two, sections 2.4 and 2.5, I explore the strategies behind horror marketing which emphasised horror as a specific and extreme genre pleasure, especially at the beginning of the cycle, in detail. Selling tips in the press book for *Frankenstein* advised "sell it for what it is ... don't mince words ... don't be afraid of its punch"⁴⁴ and explained further elsewhere:

It will have the effect of challenging the nervous ones who will be all the more anxious to see it and will serve to whet the curiosity of the rest of the public. Also it will be an honest means of avoiding any unfavorable reaction from anyone.⁴⁵

This kind of marketing angle, as I explore in detail in 2.4 and 2.5, was very common. As I suggest there, it was part of an ongoing conversation about the horror cycle's popularity

which drew its energy from the notion of horror's active *unpopularity* with some filmgoers. Despite both major box-office successes and reliable B-picture profits, discussion of the horror cycle in marketing, the trade press and especially in the censorship movement is haunted by the sense that horror film viewing or even the prospect of it *repelled* a substantial number of consumers. 'Warning' marketing, which emphasised the extreme emotional experience a film might putatively offer, functioned therefore both to create 'buzz' and hyperbole and to circumvent this possible revulsion. As I explore further in 2.5, real local censorship troubles or negative press in the media could apparently aid this marketing line, and were often perceived by the trade press to result in increased box office receipts.

'Warning' marketing, therefore, drew films more clearly into the horror cycle in the interests of both pre-empting controversy and profiting from it, but in the longer term studios were interested in generic change, proliferation and fragmentation. Conversely, the censorship lobby and its adherents were actively interested in clearly demarcating problematic content and therefore problematic genre. Marketing which played up horror angles and extremity therefore also drew the horror cycle further into a problematic relationship with the censorship lobby in which both parties, while appearing to profit from each other's investment in the cycle, had ultimately opposed interests in it which unsurprisingly led to contestation and struggle.

In summation, I suggest that the horror cycle's rapid genrification and the more prominent than usual place of specific horror angles in its marketing can both be attributed in part to the activity of censorship bodies and anti-horror campaigning, and the defensive responses these prompted in studio marketing. I explore this conflict further in Chapters Three and Four.

1.3 Trends and methods in historical accounts of the 1930s cycle

In this section I wish to discuss several particular issues of historiography which affect my argument in this thesis. The first issue relates to the perspective from which this thesis and other studies of the cycle approach broader historical issues and how far they

tend towards either a microhistorical account or a fuller explanation of the horror cycle as an outgrowth of such broader historical trends. In particular, it takes in a particular methodological issue, the extent to which such broader explanations can risk eliding or obscuring struggles and disputes within the period, especially those relating to the historical details of issues like censorship. The second issue I discuss in this section relates to recent developments in 1930s censorship scholarship, and the lack of available work upon the 1930s cycle which considers the cycle's censorship issues fully in the light of these developments. With this thesis, I hope to offer such an account. The third issue I discuss here relates to the methodology by which scholars define the historical parameters of the 1930s horror cycle, and those of horror as such. This issue relates particularly to Chapter Two, in which I discuss the emergence and development of the 1930s horror cycle over the course of 1931.

1.3.1 Top-down v. bottom-up historicising

Studies of the 1930s horror cycle have often tended to contextualise and explain it in broader historical terms. As my introduction has already mentioned, Tino Balio's account in *Grand Design* situates the horror cycle industrially, emerging primarily as part of Universal's strategy for breaking into the first-run market.⁴⁶ David J. Skal's *The Monster Show* expands extensively another, more common historical explanation for 1930s horror, which sees horror as a cultural product of the Depression and the popular fears and anxieties it generated.

While both Balio's and Skal's accounts are compelling and well-researched, both are problematic if taken as offering a *comprehensive* explanation of 1930s horror. Horror scholarship, moreover, tends to claim much greater explanatory powers for Depression culture than for Universal's business strategies. For instance, Rhona Berenstein's *Attack of the Leading Ladies* (1996) concentrates much more on a close analysis of the films, marketing and reviewing of the cycle, but like many such close studies makes use of existing broader explanations to give a sense of historical and cultural context. Berenstein's comments are fairly typical of the scholarly line that "the Depression ... fostered a climate in which the destruction of the social fabric by monsters was greeted by spectators with a sense of familiarity if not relief."⁴⁷ Similarly, Paul Wells,

in his overview *The Horror Genre* (2003), explains horror's bursts of popularity through various cultural crises, argues that the 1930s horror film was "a pertinent and persuasive model of the darker underbelly of American culture", and specifically the Depression hardships ignored by the rest of Hollywood's supposedly "escapist and utopian" output. He sees horror itself as "a history of anxiety in the twentieth century".⁴⁸

I want to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the 'Depression horror' argument here more fully partly because of its popularity in historical accounts of the cycle, but also because it offers a direct explanation for a subject which takes up much of this thesis, horror's mingled popularity and controversy. Since Skal offers the fullest account from this perspective, I will chiefly deal with his discussion. He understands the horror cycle's popularity and controversy as both drawing much of their energy from the Depression, and sees the cycle as part of its broader effects on American culture and society:

The crack in the fabric of reality known politely as the year A.D. 1931 appeared to many Americans to be the end of all earthly possibilities. The economic free-fall that had begun in October 1929 was about to hit bottom. ... A new and controversial kind of entertainment – the gangster picture – served as a lightning rod for public anger and cynicism; audiences vicariously took part in adventures outside the law and standards of fair play that now seemed utterly irrelevant ... But the most lasting and influential invention of 1931 would be the modern horror film. Monster movies opened up the possibility of psychic lawlessness; a monster, for Hollywood, was a gangster of the id and unconscious. Cataclysmic junctures in history usually stir up strong imagery in the collective mind, and the years following the 1929 crash were no exception.⁴⁹

This line of argument is compelling and useful to many scholars of 1930s horror for a number of reasons beyond Skal's energetic and full iteration of it. First, it offers explanations of *both* horror's controversy and popularity. It facilitates links with other sensational and controversial film trends of the same period, such as Warner's gangster cycle or the 'gold-digger' cycle. It also thereby allows the critic to quickly situate horror's place in the broader cinema and censorship debate, which as I have discussed in my Introduction, film historians also often link to the Depression, with a good deal of validity.

Finally, some critics, including Skal and Wells, use this argument to suggest the relationship of the 1930s horror cycle to a broader theory about the cultural work of the horror genre. If horror is *always* responsive or stemming from cultural crises, 1940s horror can be linked to the Second World War, 1950s horror as a response to the Cold War, and so on. In fact, within the history of horror studies itself, this school of thought

probably tracks back to Robin Wood's argument that 1970s American horror was a response to Vietnam.⁵⁰

Compelling top-down explanations of trends are useful to the film historian because they offer ways to link a number of trends together and to further understanding of the film industry and its products in American culture and society. American cinema did not exist in a vacuum, and film cycles in particular, being production and marketing trends which try to anticipate and respond to consumer demand, are clearly not abstracted from wider cultural trends, controversies and struggles. However, top-down explanations in general come with certain intrinsic pitfalls and potential drawbacks, of which the scholar employing them must be wary. In seeking to account for a trend from above as it were, with reference to greater forces like the Depression, can be reductive and can obscure elements of texts or genre use which do not conform to the argument the critic wishes to make, and in particular conflicts, struggles and ambivalence of other kinds. Matt Hills has perceptively commented that a number of authors take a "theory first, pleasure second" approach to horror pleasures which seeks to account for horror within a favoured theory, and further that all too often the theory itself seems to predetermine the answer. Thus sociological theories uncover horror reproducing and enacting cultural anxieties, psychoanalytic studies discover a 'return of the repressed' (and usually a second repression following it) and so on.⁵¹ I will explore this idea, and Hills' useful recent work further in section 1.4.

Skal's account, though admirably detailed and thorough in its use of archival sources, manages thereby frequently to obscure significant details and disputes in discussions of the 1930s horror cycle. For example, he cites *White Zombie's* promotional tag-line "Unusual Times Demand Unusual Pictures" and a 1932 *Washington Post* article, "Thoughts on Horror Era", in the same passage in service of his argument that contemporaries, too, perceived horror cinema's connection to the cultural upheavals of the Depression.⁵² However, in doing so he neglects the fact that these two sources are respectively promoting a horror film and writing a piece of anti-horror journalism, and both use the notion that horror is connected to the Depression *strategically*, in the service of that promotion or denigration. As I explore in Chapter Two, the "Unusual Times Demand Unusual Pictures" line was frequently used in horror marketing and pro-horror trade press journalism in order to legitimise the pleasures of horror consumption, as with an article in *Dracula's* press book also quoted by Skal in which Tod Browning

supposedly claimed that “ninety percent of the people are morbid-minded”.⁵³ This line is developed in response to established anti-horror criticism which by contrast treated those who enjoyed horror in films as a pathologised, neurotic *minority* whose tastes and compulsions naturally repelled the ‘normal’ consumer. It is from this standpoint that Nelson B. Bell, the author of the *Washington Post* article, “Thoughts on Horror Era”, writes:

Those neurotic individuals who find an agreeable occupation in following ambulances and pursuing fire engines, find themselves, at the present moment, the beneficiaries of an era in motion picture theatres dedicated largely to them and their quaint amusement tastes.⁵⁴

Bell goes on to warn that the rise of horror therefore tells of an increase in neurosis in the general public, and especially the poor, who anti-horror and pro-censorship criticism frequently argued to be particularly psychologically vulnerable consumers. “Many are without employment ... many lead their lives in a state of constant dread of the disaster that may overtake them at any minute”. If we examine Bell’s article and the promotion of *White Zombie* and *Dracula* within the context of struggles over the horror cycle, they can be seen not as disinterested cultural commentary echoing a common understanding of why horror is popular, but by contrast as propelled by their own interests and in profound *disagreement* about the nature of horror’s popularity.

Some more nuanced and careful historical accounts avoid much of this problem of reductive thinking. At their best, top-down studies can illuminate specific historical instances by showing ideological and cultural shifts and conflicts at work in them. Kendall Phillips in *Projected Fears* (2005) suggests that Stephen Greenblatt’s notion of historical *resonance* can be a useful way of asserting horror’s importance to culture without either explaining it away or making too grand claims for its cultural effects.⁵⁵ Rhona Berenstein, in *Attack of the Leading Ladies*, and Mark Jancovich, in *Rational Fears*, on 1950s horror, meanwhile, deal with the issue more effectively by stressing horror films and cycles’ roles in cultural conflicts and struggles, what Berenstein calls horror’s “function as a site of ideological contradiction and negotiation” and Jancovich describes as “the conflicts between different social groups and their attempt to defend or increase the cultural value of their specific forms of cultural capital.”⁵⁶

My own account, on the other hand, deliberately de-emphasises retrospective explanations of the cycle’s popularity or controversy. In my Introduction, I do offer some

context for the horror cycle with respect to the economic situation of the film industry and America at large in the 1930s, and particularly regarding the wider cinema and censorship debate, and the rise of Production Code censorship. In Chapters Three, Four and Five I also argue that broader historical trends in censorship had a generic influence upon horror production and trends. However, the bulk of my investigation is concerned with the smaller-scale *details* of the conflicts and struggles involved in the cycle's production, marketing, censorship and reception. I step away from retrospective, top-down explanations of the cycle in order to examine disputes concerning horror's pleasures, popularity and controversy not for their validity or support of my own theories but for the workings of the discourses of horror affect they constructed, for the specific interests in horror and cinema from which they stemmed, and how those interests were linked to the claims and arguments they made regarding horror.

1.3.2 The 1930s horror cycle and censorship

One of the aims of Chapters Three and Four of this thesis is to offer a detailed account of 1930s horror censorship and of horror's place in the 1930s cinema/censorship controversy. As I will detail in this section, the subject of censorship has not been explored in any detail by studies of 1930s horror until relatively recently. The availability of the Production Code Administration's archives has meant that studies like Skal's *The Monster Show* and Berenstein's *Attack of the Leading Ladies* have begun to engage with this material and the potential it offers for a fuller exploration of censorship. However, over the last decade or so, scholarship on 1930s censorship has been subject to important developments to which no study of the horror cycle has yet responded. Classical Hollywood censorship scholarship, meanwhile, has not yet treated horror censorship in depth despite its peculiarities as a 1930s censorship issue, and the presence of numerous in-depth studies of post-classical horror censorship, and particularly upon the 1980s British 'video nasties' controversy.⁵⁷ This section aims to demonstrate this gap in scholarship. It also argues that filling this gap by bringing the history of the 1930s horror cycle into contact with modern censorship scholarship can enhance our understanding of 1930s horror, and add to the body of knowledge on 1930s censorship as such.

In my Introduction, I offered a brief history of the Production Code and of the 1930s cinema/censorship controversy, in which I mentioned recent scholarly debate over the significance of the crisis of 1934 which led to the SRC's transformation into the PCA under Joseph Breen. For years, much scholarship followed the account of the official history *The Hays Office*, which held that under the SRC, the Code was barely administered at all, and that Breen's arrival completely transformed Hollywood cinema. Accounts such as Robert Sklar's *Movie-Made America* (1975), and more recently, Thomas Doherty's *Pre-Code Hollywood*, have argued for the existence of a controversial, even 'subversive' pre-Code cinema from 1930 to 1934, and its rapid demise under the Breen regime. Sklar has referred to the period as a "Golden Age of Turbulence" which produced 'transgressive' films and cycles like Warner's gangster cycle, *I Am a Fugitive From a Chain Gang*, Mae West's films and the horror cycle.⁵⁸

However, over the last few years, scholars such as Richard Maltby, Lea Jacobs and Ruth Vasey have prominently and plausibly argued for a revision of this history. These scholars have debunked the previously established idea of a largely unenforced Code from 1930 to 1934, followed by protest, a radical overhaul of the Code's administration, and from 1934 onwards autocratic censorship under Joseph Breen. Maltby in particular has pointed out that the accepted version relies too much on PCA's own version of events recorded in *The Hays Office*, which was motivated by the need to stage the film industry's conversion and atonement as a public relations exercise to mollify the censorship and anti—cinema campaign outside Hollywood.⁵⁹ The PCA and SRC's own archives, though, suggest that Breen merely refined the existing policies of the Studio Relations Committee. Instead, Maltby argues for a gradual and continuous increase in internal censorship throughout the period: Maltby notes that "cuts made in movies between 1930 and 1934 show an increasingly rigorous control", while Jacobs notes that "Breen did not institute radical shifts in policy ... existing policies were elaborated or amended".⁶⁰ Lea Jacobs and Ruth Vasey take a broadly similar stance to Maltby in explorations of the 'fallen woman film' and Hollywood's international relations, respectively, in Jacobs' *The Wages of Sin: Censorship and the Fallen Woman Film, 1928-1942* (1991) and Vasey's *The World According to Hollywood* (1997). Maltby, Vasey and Jacobs suggest that despite the change of name, it is more accurate to see the evolution of internal censorship policies as a gradual process which spans both organisations.

Most earlier histories of the 1930s horror cycle tended to reduce the issue of censorship to very brief comments, or to neglect it altogether. For example, Brunas *et al* in *Universal Horrors* restrict comment upon censorship in their detailed production history to a line regarding “an outright ban on horror movies imposed by the British Commonwealth” in 1936. Meanwhile, the classic accounts of the era in Clarens, *An Illustrated History of the Horror Film*, Butler, *Horror in the Cinema*, and Prawer, *Caligari's Children* do not deal with censorship issues.⁶¹ More recent work, in particular Skal's *The Monster Show* and Berenstein's *Attack of the Leading Ladies*, accords more importance to the 1930s horror cycle's relationship with censorship, and especially Production Code censorship. Such work has tended both to rely upon the sense of a 'pre-Code' period in the early 1930s during which the Code was largely unenforced. Skal comments that the Production Code was “barely enforced” in 1931 but that following the reform of the SRC into the PCA in 1934, “finally the Code had teeth”. Berenstein somewhat more cautiously notes Breen's “more enthusiastic” censorship of the Code as compared to Colonel Joy in the early 1930s, and that the PCA “required more in the way of censorship than the SRC”.⁶²

Skal's 1993 account was written prior to most of these developments in the field. Berenstein, writing several years later, acknowledges Jacobs' work and regards her assertions about early 1930s censorship as “compelling”, yet the bulk of her argument remains oriented towards the idea of a radical tightening of censorship demands with the SRC's reform into the PCA in 1934.⁶³

Existing accounts of the 1930s cycle tend to neglect or over-simplify the process of internal censorship on another front. Both Skal and Berenstein tend to construct PCA and SRC censorship as something imposed upon horror producers from above, and against their interests and that of their (transgressive) cinematic product. Skal's discussion of the censorship negotiations over *The Black Cat*, *Bride of Frankenstein* and *Werewolf of London* focuses on the PCA's “ridiculous” demands, and the wily attempts of filmmakers to get around these constraints and “[keep their] most subversive material intact”.⁶⁴ Berenstein's discussion is somewhat more nuanced, and she notes that “the industry's regulation of classic horror cinema was far from straightforward”, but her case studies of horror censorship, although they usefully chart the place of gender and sexuality in the PCA's horror policy, tend to model PCA censorship negotiation in a

similar way to Skal, somewhat neglecting the process of negotiation through which censorship was achieved.⁶⁵

Regarding the PCA in particular as autocratic censors also elides substantial differences in approach, beliefs, strategies and interests between them and local boards and independent campaigning. Skal in particular sometimes refers to and quotes all three of these groups in support of a single point, in a manner that strongly implies their interests, and views upon horror and film censorship, to be aligned.⁶⁶ The latter were – as I discussed in my Introduction – frequently explicitly anti-cinema and opposed to Code censorship, which they saw (correctly) as pro-cinema and in the pay of the film industry.

The opening of the extensive archives of the PCA and SRC, of which I make substantial use in Chapters Three and Four, have also allowed scholars to see the extent to which internal censorship was a process of negotiation between censor and studio, a relationship which, although it was defined by some differences of position and interest, usually played out its conflicts in a co-operative and sometimes even creatively collaborative manner. The censorship studies which I mention all accord much more significance to the negotiation process than 1930s horror history has done.⁶⁷ Ruth Vasey has emphasised the evolving strategy of narrative ambiguity developed by the SRC under Colonel Jason Joy, designed to allow the presentation of controversial elements with plausible deniability, while Lea Jacobs comments on the development of this strategy towards greater ambiguity throughout the 1930s.⁶⁸ These scholars also, again in contrast to existing work on 1930s horror, do not conflate Production Code censorship with local censorship and independent campaigning, but instead see the PCA and SRC as embodying fundamentally different kinds of censorship and as frequently engaged in struggles for power with them.⁶⁹

As I mentioned above, most modern scholarship on 1930s censorship, meanwhile, has not treated the horror cycle in detail. As I will discuss in Chapter Four, a brief but useful account of a single aspect of 1930s horror censorship, the H certificate and its effect upon children's consumption of horror in the United Kingdom, has been offered in the course of Sarah J Smith's *Children, Cinema and Censorship* (2005).⁷⁰ William Paul also touches on the subject in his largely post-classical study *Laughing Screaming: Modern Hollywood Horror and Comedy* (1994), giving a useful short account of *Our Movie Made Children* as an antecedent of some more recent anti-horror criticism.⁷¹ The fullest

account currently available is Stephen Prince's, in his *Classical Hollywood Violence* (2003), which devotes a chapter to "Cruelty, Sadism and the Horror Film".

However, Prince's account of horror as a 1930s censorship problem is unsatisfactory on several fronts. Prince notes, as I do in Chapters Three and Four, that the censorship problem configured as 'gruesomeness' treated horror as a problematic visual instance like moments of violence. However, his analysis, unlike mine, explicitly treats horror as a subset of violence.⁷² Although he acknowledges that many problematic instances of horror singled out by internal and external censorship were not moments of physical violence, he subsumes these into his argument by claiming that their problematic qualities are due to the fact that they show the result of violence. This argument becomes particularly convoluted when he attempts to explain shots of the Monster's sheet-swathed body in *Frankenstein* as "[picturing] the results of Frankenstein's violence on the corpses he had stolen, as did the numerous close-ups of the creature that were deleted."⁷³ As well as being somewhat reductive, this leads him to ignore the fact that local boards and independent campaigners frequently did *not* see horror as contained within key, 'gruesome' moments but as inherent in a film's overall tone, plot and subject matter. I explore in Chapters Three and Four how this gap of understanding fired controversy over horror and inhibited the SRC and PCA's attempts to contain it as a censorship issue.

Prince's account, despite being very recent, is also subject to the constructions of 1930s censorship debunked by Maltby *et al.* His account relies upon the 'pre-Code' period, he treats SRC and PCA censorship negotiation with studios as fundamentally combative rather than co-operative, and concomitant with this he sees different censorship bodies as largely consistent in their interests, concerns and analysis.⁷⁴

Chapters Three and Four of this thesis aim in part to bring modern censorship scholarship into contact with 1930s horror history. In them re-examine the question of 1930s horror censorship from a perspective informed by these recent developments in censorship studies. Archival evidence of SRC and PCA correspondence and local censorship show that the key factor in their success, or otherwise, in dealing with the horror cycle was not the co-operation or not of horror film producers, but a successful *analysis* of horror as a censorship issue. Success in the SRC and PCA's terms meant a successful anticipation of how local boards and independent campaigning identified

problematic instances of horror and constructed horror *per se* as a censorship problem. In order to be successful, such an analysis would result in a working model of horror cycle films which could consistently pinpoint problematic content, and would also integrate this model into the Production Code's wider schema, in order to bring horror censorship would fall firmly under the remit of the Code.

1.3.3 Issues of genre theory and 'silent horror' in historical horror scholarship

Any academic study needs to set some limits of scope. For a historically oriented scholar, a film cycle, being more historically discrete and limited than a broader genre, is therefore apparently an appealingly pre-defined object of study. However, examination of historical studies of the 1930s horror cycle shows that the beginnings, the end and the borders of the cycle have been consistently *disputed* by writing on the subject.

The question of the horror cycle's limits and in particular its "generic looseness" has been noted by Berenstein and is tackled in reference to this study in my Introduction.⁷⁵ The question of the 1930s horror cycle's ending is discussed further in Chapter Four. The question of the generic beginnings of the 1930s horror cycle, though, tends to imply the question of the horror film's generic beginnings as such, and is therefore particularly contentious.

In my study of the role of controversy and discourses of attraction-repulsion in 1930s horror's development, I take the 1930s horror cycle to originate horror as a cinematic genre. My discussion of early developments in marketing, criticism and censorship in particular hinge upon the fact that horror was a new generic category, not an established one. However, this has been and continues to be a point of contention amongst film scholars. Although many support my own position, many others argue that horror films were an established genre in the 1920s.

Because a scholar's position on this issue helps to define the scope of their study, most work on 1930s horror films tends to take a position upon the existence of 1920s horror films. As a result, the arguments for and against the latter are fairly well-rehearsed.

Early accounts of the horror genre almost always take the existence of horror films in the 1920s as a given. This is partly a result of the looseness with which they define horror. Butler's *Horror in the Cinema*, Prawer's *Caligari's Children* and Clarens' *An Illustrated History of the Horror Film* all treat horror as more a quality than a genre category fixedly attached to 'horror films'. Thus Butler discusses horror in Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* and Ingmar Bergman's *Wild Strawberries*, while Clarens equates horror with the fantastic, and freely discusses "horrific elements" and "moments of shock and terror" in the early fantasy films of Georges Méliès and in silent mystery films like *The Bat*.⁷⁶ Prawer even substitutes a new term, "terror-film" for horror, to mark the continuity he sees between Gothic fiction and horror cinema.⁷⁷

Horror's genre history is conceived here simply as a history of its tropes and the affect perceived to attach to them. The critic pursues the horror genre by the serial identification of horror tropes within films. All three critics see these as particularly powerfully present in German Expressionist films (particularly *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* for Butler and Prawer) and in the films of Lon Chaney Sr., to whom Butler refers as "the first authentic horror-film star".⁷⁸ These two groups of films have been those most consistently identified since by critics as 'silent horror films'.

Studies of early horror from the last two decades, tending to be both more reliant on archival material and more committed to historicised genre definitions and analysis, have questioned the existence of silent horror films. Kim Newman, in his Introduction to *The BFI Companion to Horror* (1996), gives a succinct explanation for the reasoning behind understandings that the 'silent horror film' did not exist as such during these films' original period of production and consumption:

There has been a tendency, fostered perhaps by the dearth until comparatively recently of informed histories, to treat the precursors of the genre as if they were consciously a part of the form. The German expressionist films, the grotesque Lon Chaney melodramas and the Broadway-derived comedy-'chillers' of the 20s provided a lasting inspiration for the horror film ... but these were not perceived by their makers or audiences as horror films ... the term 'horror film' seems to have been coined in the sense we now understand it around 1931 – i.e. too late for *Dracula*, but early enough for *Frankenstein* ...⁷⁹

David J. Skal's *The Monster Show*, although it devotes space both to German Expressionism and to Lon Chaney's films as antecedents of horror, asserts that the

horror film as genre began in 1931. Likewise, Roy Kinnard's *Horror in Silent Films: A Filmography, 1896-1929* (1995), despite its name, actually asserts in its introduction like Newman that the horror genre can be dated from *Frankenstein*, and that "in the silent era, there were no horror movies as the public thinks of them today".⁸⁰ Instead examines films which anticipate elements of the horror genre, and are taken to be 'ancestors' which donated tropes and elements of style to the 1930s horror cycle. Butler previously briefly acknowledged this historical dimension to the question by noting that the horror film "only came into its full flowering" in 1931.⁸¹

All existing accounts which question the validity of silent horror do not, unfortunately, offer as full a proof or argument on the subject as they might. Some studies only mention the matter briefly, as a limit upon scope. Andrew Tudor begins his historically broad survey of horror films in 1931, although he only briefly justifies the choice by noting that at this time "it is commonly claimed, Universal studios 'created' the sound horror movie."⁸² Rhona Berenstein similarly justifies her decision to begin her study of "classic horror" with *Dracula* by noting that while stylistic links might be made with precursors, "it was in the early 1930s that horror became a significant sound film phenomenon". Berenstein goes a step further towards arguing her case than does Tudor, briefly citing the fact that contemporary critics begin remarking upon horror's "heyday" in 1931.⁸³

The Newman passage quoted above suggest, in its comment regarding "informed histories" that the increased availability and use of archival material in horror histories (and perhaps the growth in academic rather than independent horror scholarship) leads logically to a general rejection of 'silent horror' as a historical genre. However, contrary to this, recent scholarship has shown that disputes over this issue persist.

Kendall Phillips' *Projected Fears* (2005) repeats the argument advanced by Newman and Skal, that silent films might *have* horror (or rather contain tropes and styles which we retrospectively 'recognise' as horror) but *are not* horror (they were not originally produced and consumed as horror). Phillips notes that "classic silent horror films were billed as "melodramas," their horrific elements wrapped up in broader, often romantic, stories. Indeed, prior to 1931 there was no such thing as a "horror film" – a term coined after the success of *Dracula* and its successor, *Frankenstein*."⁸⁴

Conversely, two recent edited anthologies of essays on horror include work on German Expressionism and on Lon Chaney's films, which they actively assert to be horror. Stephen Prince's edited anthology *The Horror Film* (2004) devotes a four-chapter section to "The Silent and Classical Hollywood Eras", two chapters of which deal with 'silent horror'. Similarly, Steffen Hantke's *Horror Film: Creating and Marketing Fear* (2004) contains two essays upon German Expressionist films which discuss them as horror. Neither these or the Introduction acknowledge debate upon the subject. In fact, the Introduction states without further discussion that *Nosferatu* is "one of the early canonical texts of horror cinema".⁸⁵ Despite the continuing, unresolved dispute between scholars who take these films to be horror and those who do not, claims on both sides continue to be made as if they were unproblematic and obvious.

I have previously noted that a fairly clear theoretical and methodological division between the two arguments, situated in how they construct horror as a genre category and crucially, where they locate it, marks established discussion of 'silent horror'. I wish to argue that the persistence of this scholarly dispute and especially the frequent retreading of the same rhetorical ground is largely due to the fact that the theoretical and methodological differences I have noted go largely undiscussed in the studies themselves (Newman is an exception here). Many scholars, as we have seen, treat the question as obvious, even self-evident. However, Casper Tybjerg, in his essay "Shadow-Souls and Strange Adventures: Horror and the Supernatural in European Silent Film" in Prince's volume, makes an observation that cuts to the heart of the issue:

To claim that the cinematic horror genre begins with *Frankenstein* is to give a historicist definition of the genre where its very existence depends on it being named and recognized by filmmakers and audiences.⁸⁶

Tybjerg writes overtly against historicism, but this statement remains accurate from a historicist perspective like my own. Tybjerg himself is unsatisfied with the trend in modern genre studies to locate a film's genre in its context rather than permanently inherent to the text, largely because as he sees it this inhibits the critic from "intuitively" recognising horror films when they see them.⁸⁷

Despite his position upon the subject, Tybjerg's essay also inadvertently illustrates a related, common problem within this dispute by repeatedly sliding between locating genre in context (its use by filmmakers, marketing and audiences in specific historical

sites) and text (horror as any film displaying the 'essential' features of horror). For instance, later in the same paragraph as the passage I quote above, he states that "any film primarily *intended* to provoke fear in the spectator can be regarded as a horror film, whether or not it was recognized as such when it was made."⁸⁸ (Italics are mine.) In order to argue for the primacy of the modern film critic's understanding of genre over specific historical uses, Tybjerg has to resort to the notion of the *filmmaker's* understanding of genre – despite the fact that he has above rejected the historicist notion that the filmmaker's "recognition", among others, might work to position a film generically.

Tybjerg continues to slide between these two locations and understandings of genre during the rest of his essay. In particular, the bulk of his argument is concerned with "the development of the horror genre", but treats films which "can only be retrospectively described as horror films."⁸⁹ This is why scholarship upon 'silent horror' is often problematic: because much of it involves the discussion of historical developments in the horror genre which are nevertheless predicated upon a retrospective, critical 'core' definition of horror rather than upon genre use in the period being studied.

It is precisely because Tybjerg acknowledges the conflicts and theoretical disputes underlying the subject that they appear so clearly in his own writing. Although I disagree with his specific conclusions, his work therefore is a commendable contribution to the discussion. Lack of acknowledgement of the theoretical issues at stake has meant that the recent rise of historical scholarship has intensified this problem, not alleviated it. In the same volume, Ian Conrich's essay "Before Sound: Universal, Silent Cinema and the Last of the Horror-Spectaculars" argues for "the Neglected 1920s" of American horror production, and discusses the contemporary reception of *Phantom of the Opera*, *Hunchback of Notre Dame* and *The Man Who Laughs*. In doing so he has to coin a new, retrospective genre term, "horror-spectacular", in order to integrate these films into the horror cycle while acknowledging that they were marketed as (implicitly multi-generic) "prestige productions" and as "historical romances", rather than horror.⁹⁰ The Introduction to Hantke's anthology, meanwhile, despite his volume's stress on marketing and upon historicist scholarship, also offers a 'core' definition of horror as "films which deal in the horrific and abject".⁹¹

Part of the problem is that genre provides a convenient way of historicising the development of tropes and style between films – Tybjerg uses it to bridge a gap between

two national cinemas. But, as we have seen, genre in classical Hollywood operated in a much looser and more flexible manner – not only might tropes and style migrate more freely between genre categories than these critics allow, but films themselves were often regenrified, and genre categories themselves both fragmentary and constantly subject to revision.

However, as I argue more fully in Chapter Two, a historicist perspective informed by the developments in genre studies I outlined in 1.2 must inevitably conclude that neither German Expressionist cinema nor Lon Chaney's 1920s films were originally produced, marketed or consumed as horror films.

Thomas Elsaesser's work has already effectively examined the generic aspects of German Expressionist cinema's original reception. While Elsaesser does not directly tackle the notion of German Expressionist cinema as horror, his discussion locates it elsewhere generically, suggesting that its frequent use of fantastic elements and popular Gothic motifs built upon the *Sensationsfilme* (popular film) in order to create commercially viable cinema which was also artistically legitimate in the eyes of the historically anti-cinema middle class. In other words, he locates it within the existing distinctions of the 1920s German cinema, in a way which effectively excludes any assertion that any of these films were originally received as horror.⁹²

Here I wish to offer a short examination of how Lon Chaney's films were marketed (largely as mysteries and melodramas) on the grounds that although this argument has been made many times, the case is rarely laid out thoroughly. After the fact, many horror scholars and critics have treated the 'silent horror film' as a distinct and unproblematic genre category. Chaney's mystery thrillers, especially those which share numerous features in common with the 1930s horror cycle (for instance, adaptations of Gothic novel sources, and the playing of physical deformity for shock value), have been routinely categorised as horror by such critics. This can be attributed to several factors, not least the tendency of genre criticism, especially in the past, to categorise a film's generic identity by its possession of certain stable 'core' attributes. Modern critics who treat Chaney's *oeuvre* as silent horror films tend to emphasise those parts of it bearing more thematic and stylistic similarities to 1930s horror films, such as *Phantom of the Opera*, with its nineteenth-century Gothic source, crypt scenes and theme of monstrosity, or *London After Midnight* with its (fake) vampire and visual similarities to *Dracula*

(Browning borrowed several scenes and re-used the costume of Luna the Bat-girl for the brides of Dracula).

However, as I will argue in Chapter Two, claims that Chaney's films were horror films stretch back to marketing for *Dracula* and *Frankenstein*. As I will further discuss in Chapter Five, by the 1940s, claims that *Phantom of the Opera* at least had been produced and consumed as horror seem to have become routine. Publicity for the 1943 remake of *Phantom of the Opera* consistently refers to the 1920s version as a horror film. For instance, *Harrison's Reports* noted that "the original version ... was a thriller of the horror type".⁹³ My own contribution to the debate is to emphasise that this confusion is not just attributable to the methodological issues regarding genre definition I discussed above, but to 1930s and 1940s sources which reinforce it to the extent that even modern historicists repeat it. This is the case with Altman's *Film/Genre*, which ironically advances the very historicist approach to Hollywood genres which has debunked the notion of Chaney the horror star. Discussing the notion of regenrification, Altman alludes to Universal's 1950s repackaging of their past horror product as "prize science-fiction creatures" due to the fashion for science fiction films and notes that "throughout the 20s and 30s, Universal had been the uncontested king of the horror film genre." Ironically, the same "revisionist history" which Altman observes Universal to be engaging in to promote their new product had previously, in the 1930s reframed *Phantom of the Opera*, a prestige melodrama, as a horror film in order to promote Universal's horror output. In fact, this regenrification of *Phantom* as a horror film was so successful that its revisionism eludes Altman's otherwise thorough historical analysis, and that of many other overviews of classical Hollywood practice.⁹⁴

Given that the dispute I am examining here focuses partly on the generic connotations, or otherwise, of Chaney's star persona, it seems pertinent here to give a brief sketch of his career. Chaney had begun his career as a 'heavy' actor, but became a star by the mid-1920s, his rise partially as a result of the great success of Universal's 1923 *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, in which Chaney wore elaborate body make-up for the title role, including a twenty-pound plaster hump, and gave an acclaimed performance.⁹⁵ Later contracted to MGM, Chaney continued to sell films as a star until his career was curtailed in 1930 by a diagnosis of throat cancer, and shortly afterwards his death at the age of 47. Chaney made only one sound film, a 1930 remake of his 1925 hit crime film *The Unholy Three*.

Chaney's stardom, like that of his contemporary John Barrymore, was based on his skills as a character actor. As his marketing tagline "the man of a thousand faces" suggests, Chaney's particular selling point was his skill at transforming his appearance completely for each role, using both performance and face and body make-ups which he designed and applied himself. He played a great range of roles, but a survey of these does show several specialities and recurring features. He several times played Chinese characters (*Outside the Law*, *Shadows*, *Mr. Wu*), twice played tragic clowns (*He Who Gets Slapped* and *Laugh, Clown, Laugh*), and sometimes played double roles (*London After Midnight*, *A Blind Bargain*, *The Blackbird* – in the former he played both a police inspector (without make-up) and the inspector's heavily disguised alter-ego, a (fake) vampire (in one of his trade-mark full face make-ups). Chaney occasionally played without make-up at all (*While the City Sleeps*, *Tell it to the Marines*). However, he was most famous for his depictions of scarred, mutilated and disabled characters – by far the most common recurring feature in his repertoire. Chaney's make-ups were creative and physically extreme, both in their appearance and the methods he used to achieve them. His earliest such role was as a legless gangster in *The Penalty* (MGM, 1920, dir. Wallace Worsley) with his legs bent double by leather straps. For other roles he mimed paraplegia (*The Blackbird*, *West of Zanzibar*, *The Shock*, *Flesh and Blood*), played a character without arms by strapping his own arms beneath a harness and using a 'leg double' (*The Unknown*), and played facially mutilated or deformed characters (*Phantom of the Opera*, *Where East Is East*, *The Road to Mandalay*, *London After Midnight*) with the aid not just of greasepaint, wigs and prosthetic plaster and rubber, but wires and tape used to painfully distort the eyes and nose.

Most of the films in which Chaney played these disabled and disfigured characters were mystery films, melodramas and thrillers, such as *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, cited by *Variety* above as an influence on the cycle, and the studio's follow-up adaptation of another nineteenth-century French Gothic novel, *Phantom of the Opera*. In several other thrillers for MGM, Chaney was directed by Tod Browning, director of *Dracula*. Among the more famous of these are *The Unknown*, *London After Midnight*, *West of Zanzibar* and *Where East is East*. The thrillers for which Chaney wore disfiguring make-up appear to be the most likely sources of the 1931 trade press's references, and are generally those referenced by name – especially those which share a studio (Universal) or a director (Browning) with early horror cycle films. Moreover, when post-1930s critics cite Chaney

as a horror star, or to his films as horror films, it tends to be to this group of films that they refer. Both 1931 and later discussions tend to elide the other kinds of character roles which Chaney played.

If we investigate the contemporary promotion and reviewing of Lon Chaney's films and in particular those later connected with 1930s horror, we do *not* find that, as the 1931 references so often suggest, *Hunchback of Notre Dame*, *Phantom of the Opera* or other apparent precursors to the 1930s cycle were produced and consumed as horror. The evidence suggests that they were *never* marketed as horror films *per se*. Instead, at the time, marketing and the trade and mainstream described them using various other overlapping genre terms, which were often shared with those of Chaney's films that are *not* cited by the 1930s trade press as an influence on the horror cycle, or treated as horror by later critics.

Phantom of the Opera's première programme notes: "Type of story Spectacular and lavishly staged drama of Parisian intrigue and gaiety, filled with romance, melodrama and mystery."⁹⁶ The *New York Times* called the same film an "ultra fantastic melodrama".⁹⁷ *Variety*'s review of *The Blackbird* calls it a "good melodrama".⁹⁸ Reviews of *London After Midnight*, in which film later critics like Ivan Butler, S.S. Prawer and Carlos Clarens have taken to be a horror film, partly on the strength of Chaney's performance as a (hoax) vampire, tell a similar story.⁹⁹ *Variety*'s review spends a couple of paragraphs assessing the contributions of numerous genre elements to the film, noting that "the murder mystery gets the play over everything", overshadowing somewhat "suppressed" "love interest" and "comedy" angles.¹⁰⁰ *Film Daily*'s review, while it uses some descriptive terms common to horror film reviewing ("thrills and weird doings in profusion ...spooky ... certain to disturb the nervous system of the more sensitive picture patrons") still categorises the film as a "mystery-drama" and devotes most of the review to the murder mystery angle ("Who killed Sir Roger Balfour?").¹⁰¹ The press book advises it be promoted as a "mystery thriller" and a "modern and scientific detective story".¹⁰²

The regenrification of these films as horror, both by later critics and in the case of Chaney's films, by marketing and criticism as early as 1931, is another question. In Chapter Two I also explore how the first assertions that *Phantom of the Opera* and other Chaney films were horror initially appear in Universal marketing for *Frankenstein* (and to

a limited extent, *Dracula*), strategically recategorising these films in order to associate Universal's new products, and incipient cycle, with established successes.

Understanding the theoretical parameters of the debate over 'silent horror' is valuable not just for the horror genre's historical narrative, but because it opens up new avenues both for the study of the 1930s horror cycle and for the films so frequently regenrified under the 'silent horror' label. For instance, Martin F. Norden and other scholars considering Chaney's films from the perspective of disability studies have done excellent work on Chaney's screen bodies, predicated upon the fact that they do not demonstrate the degree of abstract and metaphoricity often displayed by monsters in 1930s horror, but instead are direct and explicit representations of disability and disfigurement.¹⁰³ Likewise, Gaylyn Studlar, who firmly asserts that Chaney's films were not promoted or received as horror on their original release, has done useful work exploring how Chaney's characters represent a damaged masculinity.¹⁰⁴

In Chapter Two I aim to refocus the question of horror films' generic beginnings on to *how* horror emerged as a generic category in 1931. As part of this broader question, I consider the regenrification, in marketing for *Frankenstein*, of *Phantom of the Opera* and other films as horror. Considering these films as originally marketed *not* as horror allows me to consider the strategic reasons that Universal might want to associate them with this new, developing genre term and film cycle. In the light of substantial negative criticism of *Phantom* and other Lon Chaney films, this turns out to be a surprisingly complex question.

1.4 Accounting for horror: critical models of horror affect and spectatorship

In this section I wish to discuss the terms under which my thesis considers horror affect, and related questions of spectatorship and pleasure. There are several prominent theoretical positions available from which to consider this question. Here I wish to examine some of them briefly, in particular Noël Carroll's very influential work in *The Philosophy of Horror*, in order to clarify my choice to examine instead what Matt Hills refers to as "discourses of affect".¹⁰⁵

Work after Wood's "The American Nightmare", considering horror as a psychoanalytic 'return of the repressed' has tended to concentrate on the metaphorical axis rather than considering questions of affect and emotional experiences in spectatorship. This is despite the fact that horror is notionally named to denote an affective or emotional response, and much non-academic discussion of horror cycles has been very much focused on affective responses – as this thesis asserts throughout with reference to the 1930s horror cycle.

By far the most prominent attempt to respond to this gap in scholarship has been the highly influential cognitivist study of horror offered by Noël Carroll, and the various later cognitivist studies, such as Cynthia Freeland's *The Naked and the Undead*, which build upon, respond to and extend Carroll's work. Carroll proposes that horror cinema elicits "an occurrent emotional state", which he terms "art-horror" to distinguish it from the unpleasurable "natural horror" which we experience face with real horrific events. 'Art-horror' has specific objects within the horror film, in particular the aberrant biology of the monster. Carroll claims it involves both physiological responses of nausea, tension, recoil and so forth, and an evaluative component which links those responses to the object, and provides the pleasure which balances out the supposed objective unpleasantness of the sensations.¹⁰⁶

Carroll's account, while it has been influential, has also been criticised upon several grounds. Matt Hills points out that while many critics have challenged Carroll's view of fantastic biology as essential to the elicitation of 'art-horror', far fewer have criticised the cognitivist basics of his argument.¹⁰⁷ He argues that accounts like Carroll's, which value cognitive control, exclude the potential for an audience to desire to be affected, to have their mood altered by an artifact. Moreover, their emphasis on "object-directed emotion" in the form of the spectator's response to monstrosity, and on brief, consecutive instances of emotion, thereby neglects objectless affects, and sustained moods of anxiety and anticipation.¹⁰⁸

A similar problem has been noted by other horror scholars in both Carroll's work. Jonathan Lake Crane has pointed out that psychoanalytic understandings of horror spectatorship assume a uniform audience reaction.¹⁰⁹ Berenstein, similarly, argues that essentialism pervades both Twitchell's psychoanalytic account of horror spectatorship

and Carroll's cognitivist work. She particularly asserts the inadequacy of Carroll's theory of response, and the homogenous 'ideal' audience it constructs, for examining the historical audiences of 1930s horror. As Berenstein observes, the latter often behaved in ways incompatible with Carroll's model of response, and which that model therefore cannot explain or examine.¹¹⁰

Matt Hills has compellingly argued that all such explanations of audience response to horror share fundamental problems which preclude them from achieving their aim of a global account of horror's affect (or rather as Hills formulates the issue, pleasures). He asserts that "theory first, pleasure second" approaches work to close off pleasures which might be taken in horror spectatorship but which are not encompassed by the theory in question¹¹¹:

Horror's pleasures have thus been cut to a pre-given theoretical agenda, and this situation of 'theory first, horror second' has rendered invisible a range of alternative perspectives and discourses on the horror genre.¹¹²

Global theoretical explanations of horror spectatorship also frequently find themselves recommending one style or cycle of horror films and suggesting the inferiority of others, in a manner which sometimes suggests a bias drawn from the author's own taste in films. Rockett argues that "audiences are seeking transcendence" in horror spectatorship, drawing upon Romantic and Gothic notions of the sublime, particularly that of Edmund Burke's *Philosophical Enquiry*.¹¹³ This theory turns upon a distinction between (degraded) horror and (sublime) terror which leads Rockett to privilege psychological horror and its emphasis on the obscure and implicit, and to denigrate more spectacular kinds of horror film like Dario Argento's 1970s *giallo* films, or indeed much of the 1930s horror cycle.¹¹⁴

One of the most obvious ways critics have responded to this issue is by studying the behaviour of real, specific horror audiences. Hills' work in *The Pleasures of Horror*, and also that of Tamborini and Weaver, Mark Jancovich and Brigid Cherry have all done useful work on this front, and much of it works to recuperate some of these aspects of horror spectatorship and affect left untouched by theory.¹¹⁵ However, studies dealing with reception in classical Hollywood are placed in a more difficult position. Our access to the real practices of individual 1930s and 1940s audiences remains limited and second-hand. *Variety's* box office reports, contemporary trade and mainstream press criticism,

and local and independent censorship material all offer accounts of the affective dimensions of horror spectatorship and sometimes of the experiences of specific audiences and spectators. However, in all these cases, the account of affective response is mediated via a discourse about horror and its affect which, inevitably, constructs these in a way which reflects the sources' interest in the cycle.

For instance, as I discuss in Chapter Four, James Forman's *Our Movie Made Children* shapes data from several of the Payne Fund Studies into a narrative of the traumatic effects of horror film watching on several children interviewed. However, he notably neglects data from the study he quotes regarding the prevalence of enthusiasm for horror films among the children interviewed, and especially that which suggests their *enjoyment* of being made frightened, nervous and disturbed. Forman's book, which draws upon data from a sociological study, is a rare example in 1930s material on horror where one can note disparity between an account and the data providing its source. Mostly, one is faced with disparities and conflicts between two accounts from different sources of the same or similar subject, and moreover with fundamental differences in the way horror's affect is constructed. Forman seeks to integrate horror into a pro-censorship social effects discourse, and hence speaks of vulnerable young spectators compelled by horror but unpleasantly, intensely, even damagingly haunted by its images after leaving the cinema. Horror marketing, as I will argue in Chapter Two, in contrast often stressed a self-censoring audience. Marketing which purported to warn of the strength of a film's effects upon the nerves, would, press books argued, allow those who would find horror *unpleasantly* disturbing to stay away, but prove positively enticing to audiences who took *pleasure* from being disturbed.¹¹⁶

Hills argues that in fact, *all* reception studies as well as all theoretical or textual examinations of pleasure or affect in horror spectatorship are subject to this issue of discourse covering spectatorship:

Non-discursive access to the 'pleasures of horror' ... is a logical impossibility. ... A rigorously critical and material approach to pleasures taken in popular artefacts and texts must, seemingly paradoxically, engage with the circulation of *discourses of pleasure* and hence with the cultural values/distinctions of texts and discourses.¹¹⁷

In my own study, instead of reading these contemporary sources for the inaccessible 'truth' about horror affect or spectatorship, I examine these discourses themselves. As

discussed in 1.2, I take the classical Hollywood genre-making and cycle process to work *through* discussion and dispute about films. Examining the development and interaction of competing 'discourses of affect' allows me to take in some of the generic development of horror as a category.

This aspect of my enquiry aims also to offer a hopefully useful contribution to our knowledge about the history of ideas regarding horror. As I noted in my Introduction, versions of some of the most common notions in both positive and negative criticism of horror can be observed at work in contemporary discourses regarding the 1930s cycle, and some of them particularly in regard to censorship appear to have developed during its course.

During the course of this thesis I make use a number of different recurring terms, notions and descriptions relating to horror affect. Since they are part of different, conflicting discourses about the cycle and horror affect, these notions tend *not* to share a broad consensus about horror but instead to construct it in fundamentally incompatible ways. For instance, a few paragraphs ago I compared the way horror affect is described in James Forman's pro-censorship book *Our Movie Made Children* and in trade press criticism. These sources might appear to share some ideas about horror spectatorship (that it is emotionally intense, and that it might produce insomnia, to name two) but as I argued above, they have very different ideas about and interests in spectatorship itself which inform how they delineate horror affect and how it might 'work'.

Chapter Two: “The real emotional horror kick”: how horror emerged as a generic category in 1931

The horror cycle emerged as both a production trend and a new marketing category over several months in 1931. During this period, the term “horror” gradually emerged and developed too in marketing and in trade press discussion of the incipient cycle. In this chapter I argue that discourses of affect in these sources supported the generic emergence of horror. When describing and defining this apparently new kind of mystery thriller, “horror films”, both studio marketing and the trade press prioritised the pleasurable but disturbing “emotional horror kick” offered to the spectator. Marketing promised this would come thrillingly close to the limits of what audiences could stand.

I further argue in this chapter that this discourse, and the term “horror” itself, carries baggage from an earlier, non-generic derogatory use in 1920s film criticism. The word was particularly applied to some of Lon Chaney’s mystery thrillers, *not* as a generic descriptor but to describe dangerous and morbid excesses of theme and character in his otherwise successful films, entertaining to a pathologised few but too extreme for most spectators and thus potentially harmful to his career.

Seen in this light, the 1931 marketing of horror takes a pejorative term (“too much horror”) and parlays it into a selling point and a dare to audiences (“just enough horror”). When horror emerged as a generic and marketing category in 1931, an established negative term, “horror”, used to criticise certain kinds of mystery thriller, was transformed into a daring new selling point. This new, positive definition of horror still relies on the extremity and controversy implied by the term, and by the source of its appeal. Thus, we see how the horror cycle began as dependent on a degree of controversy – a fact which would profoundly affect its relationship with the wider censorship debate.

2.1. The early definition of horror and the cycle by marketing and the trade press

The term 'horror', as a cinema marketing category and generic descriptor, emerged rapidly in 1931, moving from descriptive adjective to generic noun, a product of the emergence of the horror cycle itself. Horror's emergence as a term in fact supports Rick Altman's useful observation that new genre categories emerge through just such a "constant sliding of generic terms from adjective to noun", and further that in classical Hollywood this process tended to take place through the generation of film cycles.¹

By charting its development in marketing material and the trade press, we can see how much the new category of 'horror' was produced – as its name suggests – by a supporting discourse, which prioritised the sensational, and pleasurable emotionally disturbing effects that horror films were supposed by various commentators to have upon audiences. Studio marketing and treatment of the first films of the cycle the trade press helped to create the cycle, and the generic term horror itself, by affirming the importance of this supposed emotional experience to *Dracula* and *Frankenstein's* appeal and success. The same sources did much to delineate what they perceived to be the exact nature of horror affect, and how it might be best achieved and reproduced in new films. The trade press devoted special attention what they felt were the difficulties of managing horror affect and keeping it intense enough but not too intense, and the dangers of its going too far.

The first reference I am able to find to the 1930s horror cycle as such, and the first reference to *Dracula* and *Frankenstein* as 'horror films', is in *Variety's* April 8 1931 issue, in an article titled "U. has horror cycle all to itself", which refers to Universal's first two *Dracula* follow-ups, *Frankenstein* and *Murders in the Rue Morgue*. The most obvious point to be drawn from this article is how very early *Variety* was prepared to refer to a horror cycle. In April 1931, *Frankenstein* and *Murders in the Rue Morgue* were still in pre-production, without even had a final script or a cast. Initial plot outlines for the two films were discussed with the Studio Relations Committee on 23rd June and 8th June 1931 respectively.² In fact, this report of a cycle is so early that it predates by two months the decisions of two other studios, Paramount, with *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, and MGM,

with *Freaks* – to put horror films on their production schedules.³ Yet *Variety* is prepared to refer to both *Dracula* and as-yet unproduced films as entries in a cycle of horror films.

Trade press reviews of the first few films of the horror cycle show us how rapidly a new film cycle – and its terminology – could emerge. Reviews of *Dracula*, and the earliest reviews of its follow-up *Frankenstein*, make use of the word horror more as a descriptive adjective than as a noun which readily identified genre, yet by the middle of *Frankenstein's* cinema run, trade press discussion of *Dracula*, *Frankenstein* and other follow-ups speaks of the horror cycle and “horror films” with much more frequency and assurance. To cite uses of the word in reviews of *Dracula* and *Frankenstein* respectively (italics are mine):

... its kick is the real emotional *horror* kick ... the pictorial plausibility of the scenes of *horror* ... dark deeds and terrifying *horrors* ... a cheerful play on *horrors* ... some of the *horror* tricks of sight and sound are full powered ... gentle jest that gives the elaborate *horror* just the right light touch ...⁴

Looks like a ‘*Dracula*’ plus, touching a new peak in *horror* plays ... contrast that heightens the *horror* punches ... the feeling of *horror* is not let go past the point at which it inspires disbelief ...⁵

Significantly, “horror” is largely used in a more general descriptive sense in the *Dracula* review (“scenes of horror”), as an adjective referring to the affective power that trade reviews claim are the main point of “uniqueness”, the compelling selling point, of both films. In contrast, two of the three uses in the *Frankenstein* review seem to be more specific, though still adjectival genre categorisations (“horror plays” and “horror punches”). The two reviews therefore suggest a development towards the genrification of horror which fits with the growth of the trade’s confidence in a horror cycle in the months between *Dracula's* theatrical run and the release of *Frankenstein*.

If we compare Universal’s marketing material for *Dracula* and *Frankenstein*, we find a very similar development in the way the word “horror” is used, and how the film is parsed generically. *Dracula's* press book uses the word “horror” frequently in a descriptive and adjectival sense. One sensationalist article claims *Dracula* star Bela Lugosi is surrounded by “a brooding atmosphere of horror and madness”, while another describes the film as “a tale of horror and sudden death”.

Generic descriptions of *Dracula* at its time of release, on the other hand, most frequently do not mention horror but suggest the film's "strangeness", its ability to frighten and more broadly its novelty, while slotting it into the established broad category of the mystery thriller. *Dracula* is a "hair-raising Universal drama", "Universal's sensational drama", "this sensational Universal mystery drama", "Universal's uncanny mystery drama", "Universal's strange drama of human vampires", "the strange Universal drama, "Dracula", "Universal's astounding mystery drama", and "Universal's uncanny vampire drama". However, amongst these, a few inclusions of the word "horror" in these descriptions seem potentially to shade it towards the generic and classificatory: *Dracula* is also a "weird screen production of thrills and horrors", "Universal's hair-raising drama of horrors", and "this weird drama of horrors".⁶

In the wake of *Dracula*'s reception, and the emergence of an embryonic concept of generic horror in reviews and articles discussing it as noted above, marketing of *Frankenstein* treats the term horror with an increased confidence and familiarity. One article notes that "[the studios] didn't believe that a horror picture could possibly succeed. "Dracula" was frankly and thoroughly a horror picture." Another two pieces intended for cinema programmes use the related term "shocker" to suggest that *Frankenstein*'s horror content makes it a specialised kind of film: "the world's most famous shocker", says one, and the other: "'Frankenstein' is a shocker – no two ways about that."⁷

A definite progressive development of the term, then, can be discerned from *Dracula*'s marketing, through *Dracula*'s reception and reviewing and articles which deal with the emergence of follow-ups, through *Frankenstein*'s marketing to its reviewing and assessment by the trade press. By this latter point, horror is a noun designating a production category, a trend, a cycle. This apparent progress strongly supports the idea that horror is in 1931 in the process of being genrified.

Late in 1931, reviews of the first two *Dracula* follow-ups to be released, *Frankenstein* and *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, confirm the trend, referring to them with confidence as entries in a current horror cycle. In December 1931, *Variety* said of *Frankenstein*: "Looks like a 'Dracula' plus, touching a new peak in horror plays ..."⁸ Meanwhile, the *Hollywood Reporter* asked, more tentatively: "Is there a place in theatre for pictures of the type of "Frankenstein", the coming productions of "Jekyll and Hyde" by Paramount, and "Freaks" by MGM?"⁹ Later in the month, most trade press reviews for *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*

more categorically noted that it was a new contribution to a horror cycle. *Motion Picture Herald* described it as “a distinctive contribution to the present cycle of “horror” thrillers which seems to be upon us.”¹⁰ *Variety* noted that “this time-tested horror tale ... falls into a strong spot during a popular vogue for this story type.”¹¹ Another journal commented: “Following the astonishing success of *Frankenstein*, Hollywood has taken up horror in a big way.”¹² One might speculate, moreover, that reports of this kind in the trade press in themselves actively encouraged the growth of cycles like horror by publicising these potentially lucrative production trends’ worth within the industry.

Examination of these early uses, then, supports the idea that the generic term “horror” rapidly evolved during 1931 from a descriptive adjective referring to an element of a film to a generic noun – in fact, that the term’s development over the course of the year strongly suggests it to be new. This argument is even more compelling in the light of Rick Altman’s contention that in general genrification, the emergence of new genre terms and categories, takes place through such shifts.¹³

The trade press and studios played a particularly key role in this process of definition and production trend-setting, by positively identifying key selling points. Their treatment of these films as constituting a production trend, a cycle, also arguably helped to confirm them as being precisely that. By the time of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*’s release, as we have seen, “horror” and “the horror cycle” had definitely become commonly used terms, readily used by the trade and mainstream press to identify new entries in the cycle.

What, then were the most important selling points of this new trend? Marketing material and the trade press in 1931 both assert that the most notable and distinctive characteristic of *Dracula* and its follow-ups was their use of affective ‘horror’. *Variety*’s rave review of *Dracula*, analysing the film as a success, identified its appeal like this:

On the screen it comes out as a sublimated ghost story related with all surface seriousness and above all with a remarkably effective background of creepy atmosphere. So that its kick is the real emotional horror kick ... Picture has a fragment of a prologue which turns it all off trimly for the desired effect of a cheerful play on horrors that can be enjoyed in comfort ...¹⁴

Motion Picture Herald commented similarly that “the preview audience was so entertained that it gasped and thrilled without stint, and that is the reason “Dracula” was made.”¹⁵

The trade press from the beginning, and marketing from *Frankenstein* on, focused the bulk of their attention on the intense, disturbing but pleasurable emotional experience that they claimed these films offered to audiences. Arguably, their work in developing a discourse which defining this experience and the elements and conditions of the film which they claimed enabled it was highly influential in the attempts of follow-up films to reproduce the same claimed effect. In other words, the definition of horror as a kind of cinematic affect did not just make its reproduction easier – it constructed the thing to be reproduced and offered recipes for its reproduction.

As one might suspect, the marketing of horror films for horror itself developed as the term did. Marketing of *Dracula*, as I have suggested by quoting its generic terminology, enticed potential spectators to come and experience its uniqueness, but only rarely dared them to brave the emotional experience of watching it. A typical article from the press book, intended to be used in cinema programmes, states:

The next attraction at the Theatre is a motion pictures which is absolutely in a class by itself.

It is “*Dracula*”, a sensationally different, weird and startling story of life after death ... Do not fail to see “*Dracula*”. Everyone will soon be talking about this exotic, fantastic drama, which is creating a new milestone in the history of the talking screen.¹⁶

Dracula is “sensationally different”, but the article takes care not to specify *how* it is different. As Altman has argued, marketing films as “unique” and sensational without giving generic specifics was a common strategy for films which might trouble established marketing categories, or which might have their box office damaged by links with obsolete or unpopular kinds of film. Universal in particular, he points out, tended to eschew genre terms in the marketing of prestige pictures like *Dracula*.¹⁷ I will elaborate in my next section on why marketing *Dracula* for its uniqueness may have been a strategy with defensive elements, too.

Even the few articles which mention that vampires are the film’s subject matter attempt to preserve a similar air of mystery and novelty. For instance, another article intended for use in local newspapers, entitled “*Dracula*” Creates Furore Among Picture Fans”, stated:

..... night marks the close of the engagement of “*Dracula*”, Universal’s uncanny mystery drama which has been creating a veritable sensation at the Theatre. No other talking picture ever shown in (city) has created such a furore of comment, or has so

powerfully gripped the emotions of local theatregoers. The strange subject of this startling picture – the nightly prowlings of “undead” human vampires – brings an entirely new note to the screen, and forms the basis of a story which is filled with the weird atmosphere of the supernatural.

Dracula “[grips] the emotions of theatregoers”, but we are not informed which emotions. It creates a “sensation”, “a furore of comment”, but the putative local newspaper reader is not told much more about what kind of comment is being made. We know only that it is “weird” and “uncanny”, adjectives that attempt to suggest something more novel than the usual mystery thriller, but do not explicitly describe the emotional experience of watching *Dracula*. “Weird” and “uncanny” as adjectives here create broader associations with the supernatural, but have not yet acquired the association with the advertising of generic horror which they would take on further into the cycle’s development.

However, a single article in the press book deviates from this line, and appears to begin the practice of marketing of horror for the quality or affect of horror itself. The article in question focuses on the director Tod Browning and seems designed to appeal to the established audience for his previous mystery thrillers. In sharp contrast to most of the other material, it speaks of *Dracula* as offering a specific and extreme emotional experience for the spectator. Browning is quoted as saying:

[*Dracula*] is a terrifying story, and it is presented with such sincerity and with such an assumption of truth that it exercises a most powerful effect on the emotions of the spectator. The audience watches it frozen with horror, but so fascinated that even those who faint insist on returning to the auditorium to see the conclusion of the picture.¹⁸¹⁹

This article claims that *Dracula* offers its audience a very specific kind of emotional experience, so disturbing as to leave them “frozen with horror” or yet somehow still so entertaining and compelling that its spectators would be prepared to overcome fainting fits in order to carry on enjoying it.

This line of marketing, unusual and perhaps experimental in *Dracula*’s case, became a major selling strategy in the marketing of *Frankenstein* and subsequent horror films. One tagline for advertising the picture played off the incongruous mix of emotions the film’s audience could expect to experience:

Mysterious Fear ... Chilling Horror ... Exciting Fascination ... Wonder ... all these sensations are yours with “Frankenstein.”²⁰

As one article in *Frankenstein's* pressbook puts it: "The weak-nerved patrons had been warned to stay home. So they were there in droves."²¹ This is a fairly typical rendition of this sentiment, expressed in numerous places in *Frankenstein's* studio marketing material. A sample review intended for local newspapers claimed that:

Universal's shivery, eerie and ghostly daddy of all the thrill-films, "Frankenstein", that opened to a half-scared, half-fascinated, packed house at the, yesterday.²²

Another advisory article, titled "Warn the Nervous!", included a sample warning sign which it suggested exhibitors display in their lobby or print in local press advertising:

WARNING

If you have a weak heart
and cannot stand intense
excitement, we advise you
NOT to see FRANKENSTEIN
.....If, on the
contrary, your nerves can
stand electrifying drama
you will find it in
"FRANKENSTEIN"

This marketing line emphasises the extremity of the sensational experience *Frankenstein* supposedly offers, and its nearness to the intolerable or unpleasant. It dares audiences to see the film by warning them, as advertising for a rollercoaster or a sideshow might.

While marketing material focused on selling this "emotional horror kick", especially for its extremity, the trade press, behaving according to their own interests, devoted especial attention to the mechanics of creating and managing this peculiar cinematic affect. According to them, and especially to *Variety's* consistently detailed analyses, horror's affect, and specifically the combinations of attraction and repulsion it evoked, made it difficult to manage. A developing discourse maintained that the success of a horror film depended on its maintenance of a delicate emotional balance in the audience, its success in going just far enough, but not too far. Trade press reviews analysed how films managed and moderated horror by precise orchestration of film form, estimating success and stressing the dangers of extremity, that audiences might reject a film which went too far.

Maintaining this “emotional horror” without either breaking the mood or pushing the horror beyond what the audience could enjoy was, according to the trade press, the trickiest and most crucial task of the new horror films. The *Hollywood Reporter* review of *Frankenstein* notes that it is “not an easy thing to direct – just how far to go in playing upon an audience’s credulity, its sympathy, its nerves. Whale seems to have gone far enough, but not too far.”²³ Similarly, the *Variety* review of *Dracula* comments:

Such a treatment called for the utmost delicacy of handling, because the thing is so completely ultra-sensational that the faintest excess of telling would make it grotesque. Nice judgment here gets the maximum of shivers without ever destroying the screen illusion ...²⁴

Dracula’s success as a film depends upon the careful weighing out and balancing of different elements to achieve its “emotional horror kick”, the review suggests. Likewise the *Variety* review of *Frankenstein*, with a growing confidence in the incipient cycle, devotes most of the review to a detailed analysis and description of how *Frankenstein* manipulates affect through careful and precise management of a “series of successive jolts”:

Appeal is candidly to the morbid side and the screen effect is up to promised specifications ... Maximum of stimulating shock is there, but the thing is handled with subtle change of pace and shift from tempo that keeps attention absorbed to a high voltage climax, ticked out with spectacle and dramatic crescendo, after holding the smash shivver on a hair trigger for more than an hour.

...

Subtle handling of the subject comes in the balance that has been maintained between the real and the supernatural, contrast that heightens the horror punches ...

In like manner the feeling of horror is not once let go past the point at which it inspires disbelief, where out of excess it would create a feeling of makebelieve. This is the trick that actually makes the picture deliver its high voltage kick. The technique is shrewd manipulation. After each episode dealing with the weird elements of the story there is a swift twist to the normal people of the drama engaged in their commonplace activities, a contrast emphasising the next eerie detail.²⁵

In this review, the precise descriptions of horror affect and the extrapolation of how it might technically be achieved are equally notable. The colloquial, highly specialised professional vocabulary of Hollywood trade reviews, as can be seen, already has a small lexicon devoted to the affect of horror and suspense. The language overwhelmingly refers to violent physical sensation, particularly electric shocks: “jolt”, “kick”, “high-voltage”, “stimulating shock”, “smash shivver”, “punches”. “Stimulating shock” is particularly suggestive in the way it recalls the “half-scared, half-fascinated” line of horror

marketing. The idea that *Frankenstein* “[holds] the smash shivver on a hair-trigger” for its entire length also recalls the notion of an audience taking enjoyment from being pushed to the limit of what they can stand.

The *Variety* review, however, is attentive to the skill and judgement it feels is necessary to achieve such an effect, placing a particular stress on the manipulation of tempo. *Frankenstein*, and by extension any follow-up horror films wishing to emulate its success, has a core of “weird” subject matter, but chiefly deploys affect via arraying this subject matter through a narrative of suspense characterised by well-judged oscillations of shock effects and bathos.

Variety’s review of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* likewise concentrates on a critique of the handling of rhythm and pacing, which it treats as crucial to the success of horror affect:

High pitch of emotional horror is difficult to maintain beyond some certain degree of elapsed time, and the 98 minutes this picture runs carries it past that human limit.

Camera trick of changing a central figure from the handsome Frederic March into the bestial, ape-like monster Hyde carries a terrific punch, but in each successive use of the device – and it is repeated four times – it weakens for hair-raising effect. The new version, seeking to improve the old, has brought out too many complications.²⁶

When a horror film went ‘too far’, these reviews suggest, there could be several negative results. The reviewer of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* is concerned that poor pacing and excessive repetition might weaken the emotional experience, whereas the reviewers of *Dracula* and *Frankenstein* note that “excess of telling” might risk suspension of disbelief and therefore the audience’s emotional investment in the film. However, there was also another, more damaging kind of potential negative reaction to horror which “went too far” – that of outright rejection and disgust. As I will explore in the rest of this chapter, the shadow of this possible repulsion was actually intrinsic to horror’s initial definition as a genre term, and studio marketing therefore went to some lengths to insure itself against this possibility. A closer examination of the way marketing and the trade press treated the incipient category of horror brings these issues to light.

2.2. Strategic references to the films of Lon Chaney in 1931 horror marketing

As I have argued both above and in Chapter One, horror emerged as a generic category with the horror cycle in 1931. However, as I also discussed in Chapter One, a persistent strand of horror criticism has claimed that certain 1920s films were horror, especially some American films starring Lon Chaney Sr. As I will have argued in Chapter One, Chaney's films were *not* produced, marketed or received as horror in the 1920s. However, 1931 horror marketing repeatedly claims links with Chaney's films, while also making the parallel claim, which fits with what we have already seen of horror's emergence as a category, that *Dracula* and *Frankenstein* were generically novel and daring.

The *Variety* article "U has horror cycle all to self" of April 1931, which I mentioned in my last section to be the first extant mention of the horror cycle as such, displays an early example of this phenomenon. There is an intriguing disjuncture between the writer's claim in the first paragraph that horror films are a new and risky venture, and the claim later, in the third paragraph, that Universal had a history of making horror films.

With "Dracula" making money at the box office for Universal, other studios are looking for horror tales – but very squeamishly. Producers are not certain whether nightmare pictures have a box office pull, or whether "Dracula" is just a freak.

To date, no other studio has tried to follow in U.'s steps ... Following "Dracula", U. will make "Murders in the Rue Morgue", then "Frankenstein", mid-Victorian melo of a medical student who finds the secret of life and chemically creates a man. Bela Lugosi goes into the latter.

Universal has gone for the horror thing in the past. Carl Laemmle being one of the few to spend money on such stories.²⁷

This April 1931 *Variety* article makes two contradictory claims about the origins of the horror cycle. As I noted before, the article claims that studios are uncertain whether "nightmare pictures have a box office pull, or whether "Dracula" is just a freak" – which seems to clearly suggest that "horror tales" are an untried and untested kind of film, and not enough is known yet about public response and demand regarding them. However, in the last paragraph it also states that Universal "has gone for the horror thing in the past". Intriguingly, the mention that few other studios have spent money on such films suggests something unpopular or problematic. So, if Universal has made and released a number of supposed horror films in the past, then why is the public's reaction to horror

films an unknown quantity? “Horror” as a genre category, the article manages to suggest, is both new and not new. In fact, such contradictory references to horror, as both a new and a familiar genre category, are a recurring feature of contemporary trade press and promotional writing about *Dracula* and *Frankenstein*.

References to a supposed past history of horror films appear particularly anomalous when one considers just how much early articles talked up horror films as new, unusual, unique, and even a risky commercial venture. *Motion Picture Herald’s* review of *Dracula*, titled “WEIRDLY UNUSUAL”, makes a statement typical in this regard:

Universal has presented something unusual to the screen in “Dracula”. To appreciate just how unusual it is, you must see it, for it deals with vampires who are “half-deads”, wolves who howl in the night, bats who suck blood, insane men, and red mists which sweep across lawns just before dawn.²⁸

Variety begins its own review of *Dracula* with a similar observation: “Here was a picture whose screen fortunes must have caused much uncertainty as to the femme fan reaction.”²⁹ Here doubt about a film’s audiences is expressed in gendered. Rhona Berenstein’s work has dealt very fully with issues of gender in horror marketing, and has noted in particular the necessity of successfully marketing horror to female consumers in order for the cycle to succeed.³⁰ Comments like *Variety’s* here imply that *Dracula’s* content was an unknown quantity, from which we might surmise that it was not comparable with any established generic category – a theory which is supported by the development I charted in 1931 of the term “horror” from adjective to noun.

However, trade press comments on the first two films of the cycle as unusual or risky ventures are counterpointed by numerous seemingly contradictory comments concerning precedents to the horror cycle. Often, as with the 1931 *Variety* article, both kinds of comments are found in the same piece. For instance, *Hollywood Reporter’s* review of *Frankenstein* contains this collection of observations:

You’ll never tell anything about this one from a preview ... It is the story itself, its effect on a paying audience, the word-of-mouth that will go out that will determine whether or not Universal has the greatest shocker of all time – or a dud ... Has Universal, in the person of Boris Karloff, discovered a successor to Lon Chaney? ... for one hundred years [*Frankenstein*] has remained alive in the interest of those book readers who go in for ghost stories. Now we’ll see if these same people go to motion picture theatres.³¹

A similar juxtaposition occurs in *Variety’s* review of *Frankenstein*:

It took nerve for U to do this one and 'Dracula', all of which may track back to the gruesomeness in 'The Hunchback of Notre Dame', which was also produced by this company.³²

Paragraphs after pointing out *Frankenstein's* unfamiliarity and the impossibility of predicting audience response to it, the *Hollywood Reporter* review suggests two distinct 'ancestries', with corresponding existing audiences: the actor Lon Chaney's films, and 'ghost stories' and Gothic novels. References to Chaney's films are by far the most common form of specific reference made in comments which posit an established heritage of horror. Especially common are reference to the two big-budget historical mystery thrillers Chaney starred in at Universal, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* and *Phantom of the Opera*.

Dracula and *Frankenstein* are both adaptations, directly of plays and ultimately of nineteenth-century Gothic novels. However, this association with the literary and theatrical Gothic does not offer any satisfactory explanation for these references, for several reasons. First, the previous history of the novels *Dracula* and *Frankenstein* and their theatrical adaptations do not explain these specific references to past horror in *film*. Secondly, despite adjectival and descriptive use of the word horror in criticism of Gothic literature and theatre, I have been able to discover no reference to horror as a literary or theatrical *genre* before 1931, although there are plenty from 1932 onwards. This further supports the view that as a genre term horror emerged in the cinema first. Thirdly, as is suggested by *Hollywood Reporter's* uncertainty in its review of *Frankenstein*, quoted above, that "book readers who go in for ghost stories ... go to motion picture theatres", and also by the overwhelming emphasis on film precedent, the trade press did not see a literary or theatrical market for a text as translating in any unproblematic way. Adaptation, as *Hollywood Reporter* implies, involves both transformation and a degree of risk concerning the success of the transformed product in a new marketplace.

Marketing material for *Frankenstein* shows Universal's own publicity department making the same two contradictory claims for the origins of the 1930s horror cycle. It suggests, in fact, that like descriptions of horror as terrifying but fascinating, both claims may have been first circulated by Universal as marketing angles in promotional material for *Dracula* and *Frankenstein*. We have already seen a plausible origin for the assertion that horror was new and unique – in the marketing of *Dracula*, which adopted a common tactic for

creating interest in a difficult-to-market film without pinning its generic specifics down too much.

Frankenstein's press book makes equally frequent comment on the newness and generic uniqueness of *Frankenstein* and *Dracula*, and on their inheritance of a previous Universal history of successful horror films. It frequently phrases the latter claim via comparisons between Boris Karloff and Lon Chaney. These include an article on Karloff's make-up headed "Boris Karloff Succeeds Chaney", and a marketing suggestion in the section headed "How to Sell It":

BORIS KARLOFF ... one of the most magnificent pieces of screen make-up and acting since Lon Chaney's work in the classic "HUNCHBACK of NOTRE DAME."³³

Two other articles in the press book attempt, slightly more broadly, to link *Frankenstein* to Universal's silent Gothic thrillers and melodramas. A review for local reproduction claims that "Universal has long since proved its superiority in making thrillers. "The Hunchback of Notre Dame", "The Phantom of the Opera", "The Man Who Laughs", "Dracula" and other greats have all come to us under the Carl Laemmle banner." Another article is titled: "Pastmaster of Thrillers: Universal Whose latest Shocker "Frankenstein" is Playing the _____ Theatre Reminds People of Past Triumphs".³⁴

This phenomenon was present, in a more rudimentary form, in *Dracula's* marketing. *Dracula's* director, Tod Browning, also directed many of Chaney's films (although he directed neither *Phantom of the Opera* or *Hunchback of Notre Dame*), and the press book makes links at various times to Browning's history of directing "weird and fantastic crook stories", usually in order to point out that Browning is a successful specialist, and *Dracula* excels all his previous efforts.³⁵ A typical mention notes that:

[Browning] has long specialized in writing and directing strange stories for the screen, usually with Lon Chaney as the star ... But "Dracula" is said to excel them all in the amazing strangeness of its story.³⁶

Several articles, like this one, make specific reference to Lon Chaney: for instance, one article is titled "'Dracula', Greatest Film Made By Director of Chaney Pictures", and another mentions that Browning is "famous as the director of many of Lon Chaney's weird stories."³⁷ Such references co-exist with the selling of *Dracula* as unique and new

elsewhere in the press book, despite the fact that they seem to contradict and perhaps even undermine each other.

In a similar vein, *Frankenstein's* studio marketing material contains, as well as its many assertions that the film continues an established history of supposed Lon Chaney horror films, numerous, apparently contradictory claims that *Dracula* and *Frankenstein* were less a continuation of "past triumphs" than a daring and unprecedented endeavour. These expand on attempts to market *Dracula* for uniqueness, stressing a notion which, although it repeatedly surfaces in reviews of *Dracula*, its own marketing had avoided - that watching such a film was a terrifying and emotionally extreme experience. Two different articles attempt to explain that *Dracula's* success was unexpected, even shocking:

Last year Carl Laemmle Jr. flew in the face of Providence, as it were, and made "Dracula". Every other company had rejected it, because they didn't believe that a horror picture could possibly succeed. "Dracula" was frankly and thoroughly a horror picture. But it shattered box-office records and stood the industry on its astounded head.

...

As a matter of fact, Carl Laemmle Jr. has given the world a tremendous thrill by his courage in producing this picture. Vampires, monsters and criminally inclined gorillas were not supposed to have the power to evoke moving picture attendance. But then Universal made "Dracula". It was one of the most popular plays of last year. It was followed by "Frankenstein", which had an even greater box-office appeal.³⁸

The press book for *Frankenstein*, therefore, shows evidence of two contrary, even contradictory promotional strategies: horror as daring and new, as seen in the articles quoted here, and Universal as "past masters" of horror, as seen in the other articles I quoted above. Both marketing strategies, and their contradictory use alongside one another, correspond to comments made about horror in trade press reviews of *Dracula* and *Frankenstein*. Significantly, though this press book tells us that Universal at least invested in this contradiction, and may have actually originated it.

Both the suggestion that *Dracula* and *Frankenstein* were novel and that they have connections with previous, successful films – especially previous major successes of Universal's own like *Hunchback* and *Phantom* – are both marketing strategies which have obvious explanations. I have already discussed the use of undefined novelty as a selling point in *Dracula's* marketing in particular. The association of a new film with a studio's prior major successes also makes sense. However, the notes of ambivalent and risk in marketing and reviews, and in particular the April 1931 *Variety* article's reference

to precedents in Universal's production history for its risky investment in horror, prompted me to investigate the links being made by the trade press and marketing between Lon Chaney's films and *Dracula* and *Frankenstein*. As I have previously discussed in Chapter One, all available evidence suggests Chaney's films were *not* marketed as horror, and as I have already asserted in this chapter, horror as a film genre term appears to emerge during the course of 1931. This means that connections between the emergent 1930s horror cycle and Chaney's 1920s mystery thrillers are less straightforward and more complex than critics have so far asserted. I examine this issue in order to further my analysis of *how* the 1930s cycle was defined and constituted, and how it marketed itself.

2.3. "Horror" in the 1920s?: non-generic discourses of "horror" in negative criticism of Lon Chaney's films

My discussion of the marketing and reception of Chaney's films, as my discussion in Chapter One made clear, understands that Chaney's mystery thrillers were quite definitely *not* marketed or reviewed as horror films. This suggests that there is another explanation for the 1931 Chaney references in horror marketing and in the trade press. In fact, negative critical (but crucially, *not* generic) use of the word "horror" in reviews of Chaney's films does have a direct connection to uses of the word "horror" early on in reviews and marketing of *Dracula* and *Frankenstein*. The 1931 reworking of this sense of 'horror' into a viable marketing category was therefore a spinning of a supposedly negative affective experience into a positive one.

By investigating the 1920s marketing and reception of some of Lon Chaney's films, we can ascertain the origins of the claims made about these films in 1931 by horror marketing and the trade press of 1931. What is the value of this investigation to my broader discussion of the 1930s cycle? I would argue that in fact, investigating these questions yields some very useful information about the kind of production and marketing category that horror and the horror cycle was in the process of becoming in 1931. Discovering what kind of received ideas and baggage attached to the term "horror"

sheds much light on the *kind* of production and marketing category, and the kind of cycle, that 1930s horror became._

The same 1920s archival sources which clearly debunk the notion of Chaney's films as horror also suggest why it would have been useful for 1931 marketing and trade press to claim connections between these films and the early horror cycle. The most obvious reason would be that it was prudent of Universal to suggest connections between their prestige pictures *Dracula* and *Frankenstein* and past successes. Chaney's two films with Universal, *Hunchback of Notre Dame* and *Phantom of the Opera*, had both been very successful big-budget prestige pictures, and moreover, like *Dracula* and *Frankenstein*, period melodramas with well-known literary origins.

However, the connection suggested with Lon Chaney's films also brought with it more ambivalent connotations, especially in the growing use of the word "horror" to describe *Dracula*, *Frankenstein* and various forthcoming films. Trade and mainstream press reviews of Chaney's films had also frequently used the word 'horror', but as a *non-generic* adjective to describe audience reaction to grotesque, disturbing or "weird" protagonists and plots. However, such usages were always negative, a criticism of the film in question's *failure* to appeal to audiences, rather than a description of a viable kind of audience appeal. The successful marketing of the 1930s horror cycle, partially via its resemblance to these controversial films and using the same term which had previously been used to attack them, involved the spinning of criticism into sensation, negatives into positives. A more detailed examination of this strategy and its origins shows us how horror, and the discourses surrounding the selling of horror, was not just enmeshed in controversy from its beginnings but in some senses *predicated upon* controversy. This, in turn, sheds light on the interaction of controversy and the audience pleasures of horror's affect throughout the 1930s horror cycle.

A closer examination of the trade press reviews both of Chaney's films and of *Dracula* and *Frankenstein* clarifies several issues. It shows us a second reason that the trade press in 1931 made claims of a previous history of horror, and a further reason for Universal's double-edged marketing of the early horror cycle.

When trade press reviews in 1931 used the word 'horror', as adjective or emerging generic noun, of *Dracula* and *Frankenstein*, they were in fact using an established non-

generic descriptive term which they and others already regularly applied to Chaney's films to describe audience response – albeit with a somewhat different, negative import. As I mentioned above, 'horror' was used as an adjective, but not to connote a viable selling point so much as a drawback. *Variety's* review of *Phantom of the Opera* is a very full example of this earlier, negative and adjectival, definition of the term 'horror'. Beginning with the line, "Universal has turned out another horror", it continues damningly:

This newest of U specials is probably the greatest inducement to nightmare that has yet been screened. If the picture equals in dollars the sleepless hours it will cause the children who view it, U has a money film on its hands — and it's reported the production cost approached \$1,000,000, including over \$50,000 for retakes, far above the firm's expectations ...

There has been no doubt in the trade for some time that the bunch knew they had a bad boy in this one, but were helpless after the money poured in and had to go through with it. Shown some time ago in San Francisco to obtain a line on what they had, what they had didn't please them nor San Francisco. It was then retakes were ordered, with some attempt to insert comedy. Exploitation was the final point decided to push over the picture. There has been much of that in and around New York. Placing the picture as a special on Broadway may tend to fool some exhibitors, but every exhibitor solicited or persuaded or intending to play this picture should either see it first in person or have some member of his family see it before presenting this horrifier before his patronage.

It's impossible to believe there are a majority of picture goers who prefer this revolting sort of a tale on the screen. It is better for any exhibitor to pass up this film or 100 like it than to have one patron pass up his theatre through it.³⁹

The film itself is referred to as "another horror" and as "this horrifier", a use of horror as a noun connoting a kind of film – but not, however, as the reviewer sees it, a viable genre. In fact – as the last paragraph makes particularly clear - 'horror' here specifically refers to the audience reaction of repulsion that the reviewer believes *Phantom of the Opera* will generate. The reviewer firmly believes that *Phantom of the Opera* is a 'bad boy', a financial disaster in the making, because it is a "horror" and an "inducement to nightmare". The uses of the word "horror" and "horrifier" are consolidated by the reference to nightmares and sleepless nights and the further reference to the film as "revolting". While *Phantom* is not described as a horror film *generically* speaking, the non-generic, descriptive use of the word horror and related vocabulary used to describe *Phantom* as a disturbing cinematic experience is close to that of 1930s horror publicity and media discussion. Here, though, it is used in an overtly negative sense, rather than ambivalently or with some positive connotations.

The reviewer anticipates a particular kind of trouble – controversy, or rather its less box-office friendly-relative, notoriety. The prediction is that a *majority* of cinemagoers, rather than a vocal minority, will reject *Phantom*. The reviewer accesses discourses of censorship and anti-cinema criticism, using them to appeal to the film's potential effects on child spectators and the consequences of bad publicity for the whole industry. The suggestion is less that *Phantom* will be a divisive and controversial film than that it will be rejected by the "majority of picture goers". Furthermore, this negative reaction could be so intense, violent and perhaps public that cinemas might permanently lose customers over it, and that one angry patron could cause significant trouble. Perhaps significantly, this disaster never materialised. On the contrary, *Phantom* performed thoroughly impressively at the box office, earning a \$539, 682 profit.⁴⁰

Similar sentiments, and frequent recurrences of the word "horror" used as a pejorative descriptive term, are found in negative trade and mainstream press reviews of numerous Chaney thrillers recategorised as horror by later critics. As I have mentioned, the marketing of *Dracula* and *Frankenstein* talked up the importance of Chaney's more gruesome and extreme make-ups to his reputation as a star. However, many contemporary reviews in the 1920s argued that such roles were not so much the keystone of his reputation as a character actor as hampering, even actively detrimental to it. Gaylyn Studlar has made a similar, useful observation in *This Mad Masquerade: Stardom and Masculinity in the Jazz Age*, noting that contemporary reviews frequently saw Chaney's repeated appearance as mutilated, physically and psychologically grotesque characters as a danger to his box office draw, rather than the source of it.⁴¹ For instance, *Variety's* generally negative review of *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* noted that "Mr Chaney's performance as a performance entitles him to starring honors ... but his make up as the Hunchback is propaganda for the wets. His misshapened figure from the hump on his back to the deadeyed eye on his face can not stand off his acting nor his acrobatics, nor his general work of excellence throughout this film." The *Variety* review of *Phantom of the Opera* quoted above makes this point even more forcefully:

Lon Chaney is again the "goat" in the matter, no matter if it is another tribute to his character acting. His makeup as the hunchback within the Notre Dame Cathedral was morbid enough, but this is infinitely worse, as in this instance his body is normal with a horrible face solely relied upon for the effect.

Following the "Hunchback" thing it becomes a moot question whether or not Chaney's name in connection with a picture is going to keep children away from a theatre. Any number of "Unholy Threes" cannot erase the impression of these two makeups. While

adults may throw off the hideous film characterizations if leaves an aftermath that can't be too favorable for Chaney as a general draw.⁴²

Several years later, the *New York Telegram* made similar comments with regard to *The Unknown* and to the apparent popularity of a joke where the teller would point out a bug by saying, "Don't step on it, it might be Lon Chaney":

Despite the popularity of the Chaney distortions, it is rumored that this will be the actor's last film of this sort for some time. The "don't step on it" jokes, combined with a poisonous Broadway rumor that Chaney's next film would be entitled *Teddy the Torso*, have apparently pierced deeply into Hollywood hearts.⁴³

Variety's predictions of box office catastrophe for *Phantom* had proved inaccurate. Criticism here actually acknowledges the popularity of *London After Midnight* and other Chaney mystery thrillers ("despite the popularity of the Chaney distortions"). So either audiences were prepared to tolerate morbidity and gruesomeness for the other pleasures of a Chaney thriller (bravura character acting, mystery and solution, suspense, romance, spectacular historical costumes and sets in *Phantom* and *Hunchback*) – or the press's concern over the *potential* for the public to reject Chaney leads them to underplay the acknowledged "popularity of the Chaney distortions".

However, where such critical attacks on these films can be found, so can the concomitant implication that if such characteristics appear in an entertainment film and the majority of spectators reject them, *some* spectators might consider such "inducements to nightmare" enjoyable, even a selling point. As with *Variety's* attack on *Phantom*, our sense of the inevitable flip-side of such attacks is heightened by the knowledge that most of the films panned on the grounds of their "morbidity" or "horror" achieved very healthy box-office. *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* was Universal's biggest box-office hit of 1923.⁴⁴ *London After Midnight* grossed over a million dollars worldwide and made a \$540, 000 profit, *The Blackbird* made a \$263, 000 profit, *The Road to Mandalay* a \$267, 000 profit. *The Unknown*, perhaps the most critically vilified of all these films for its morbidity, made a very healthy \$362, 000.⁴⁵

For instance, several similar reviews, all making use of the word "horror", appear in the trade and mainstream press, in reviews for Chaney's 1928 film *The Unknown*, directed by Tod Browning. *The Unknown* was a revenge-themed melodrama set in a circus in which Chaney played an armless man, Alonzo, with his arms strapped up and a 'leg

double' to perform such stunts as pouring wine with his feet. At the climax, Chaney's character Alonzo attempts to sabotage his rival's strong man act so that wild horses will tear his arms off – but the scheme goes wrong, and Alonzo himself is trampled by the horses. *The Unknown*, despite the excellent box-office reception I mentioned above, had a very mixed critical reception which included a number of very strongly worded bad reviews, like the two below, from the *New York Herald Tribune* and the trade newspaper *Harrison's Reports* (italics are mine):

... the case of Mr. Tod Browning is rapidly approaching the pathological. After a series of minor *horrors* that featured such comparatively respectable creations as murderous midgets, crippled thieves and poisonous reptiles, all sinister and deadly in a murky atmosphere of blackness and unholy doom, the director presents us now with a melodrama that might have been dashed off by the Messrs. Leopold and Loeb in a quiet moment.⁴⁶

One can imagine a moral pervert of the present day, or professional torturers of the times of the Spanish Inquisition ... enjoying screen details of the kind set forth in *The Unknown*, but it is difficult to fancy average men and women of a modern audience in this enlightened age being entertained by such a thoroughly fiendish mingling of bloodlust, cruelty and *horrors* ...⁴⁷

Both reviews suggest by horror a 'pathological' kind of filmmaking that the reviewers consider can only be produced or consumed by those with abnormally sadistic minds, as the reference to the notorious contemporary murderers Leopold and Loeb suggests. Films containing such "horror" might appeal to a minority of "moral perverts". Relevantly for the 1930s horror cycle, lurking behind the idea of cinemagoers rejecting *Phantom* and other Chaney mystery thrillers, there is the implication that an 'abnormal' minority might actively enjoy the film's horrifying and disturbing content, "this revolting sort of a tale" as *Variety's* review of *Phantom* puts it. Conversely, within 1930s promotion and positive reviewing of horror films, there usually lurked the idea of unproductive controversy, that some spectators might be repulsed, disturbed or horrified *without* enjoyment.

Overall however, in the 1920s the notion of horror as an affective experience apparently remained unviable as a selling point – as the trade and mainstream press reasoned, appealing to this "pathological" minority of potential consumers of horror meant alienating and repelling the "average" majority of cinemagoers who did not share such tastes. In fact, films containing "horror" might be on these grounds unsuitable for public exhibition.

Despite this relentlessly negative critical stance, it is worth noting just how much this definition of cinematic “horror” has in common with the later, generic sense of the word. “Horror” in films refers, in these 1920s press uses, both to a particular affective response from audiences, and to the features of the film which are believed to provoke it. The affective response is characterised as a strong reaction of attraction or repulsion to morbid content. Instead of concentrating on the mingling attraction and repulsion in spectator response, these reviews treat reactions to horror as fiercely polarised, either the one or the other. As we will see in later chapters, 1930s anti-horror and pro-censorship discourse tended similarly to argue for such a polarisation of response between “normal” spectators (who reject horror) and those with “pathological” tastes (who account for the success and profitability of the cycle).

References to horror appear to be far more frequently attached to Chaney’s films than to other mystery thrillers, suggesting that there is something idiosyncratic about them. However, it is not my task in this chapter to trace this quality itself within films themselves so much as claims and discourses surrounding such films in those sources who had most to do with defining the production and marketing categories of 1930s cinema.

The meaning of 1931 references to Lon Chaney’s films answers some questions about their place in the generic beginnings of the 1930s horror cycle, but poses new questions too: how and why was this vilified quality transformed into something that could be successfully sold to audiences? Horror began to come together as a generic category in the wake of *Dracula*, but its name referred back to its recent prehistory as a negative, descriptive critical term which signified the potential repulsion of audiences more than it did their attraction. The overtones of this original, pejorative meaning would continue to haunt the horror cycle throughout its course, and as we will see in my next chapter, the arguments used against horror as a mere quality would much more vigorously pursue horror as a film cycle.

2.4. “*Frankenstein* out-draculas *Dracula*”: marketing horror as “bad boy” in 1931

The explanation of previous, non-generic uses of the word “horror” in film criticism which I laid out in the last section clarifies why the trade press saw *Dracula* and *Frankenstein* as such daring investments, but as I mentioned, prompts a set of further questions. *Dracula*, as we have seen, was marketed on the very morbid qualities connoted by “horror” in its negative sense – while *Frankenstein* was promoted as a more extreme follow-up to *Dracula*. To quote a phrase repeated several times in *Frankenstein*’s marketing material, it was intended to “out-dracula *Dracula*”. For example, two promotional articles intended for cinema programmes glossed the relationship of the two films like this:

You may have seen a production called “Dracula”. If you did, take our tip: “Frankenstein” far out-Draculas “Dracula.” If you didn’t, it may interest you to know that it was one of the most exciting and popular pictures of last year. You missed something there that everyone was talking about. But don’t miss “Frankenstein”. It will be talked about plenty.

...

Unless you are entirely shock-proof, we advise you to come prepared. “Frankenstein” is a shocker – no two ways about that. The Universal Company, which made “Dracula”, planned to out -“Dracula” “Dracula” in this production, and they have done it.⁴⁸

This marketing line, as I mentioned before, takes a much more confident approach to *Frankenstein*’s extremity and its horror content. Such content was retrospectively treated as the most important part of *Dracula*’s success. Potential controversy or protest is glossed as positive sensation, a shocking (but strategically vague) thing that one needs to “come prepared for”, but also something “exciting and popular”, “that everyone was talking about”.

For horror to be genrified – to become a production and marketing trend, a cycle – it had to be identified and then marketed as a prioritised quality central to the appeal of certain films. In turn, for that to happen, this previously negative term had to be valorised, the connotations of ‘horror’ revised. What were the conditions under which horror was transformed from a pejorative critical description to a new genre term that categorised a popular new film cycle? Did any promotional strategies aid this transformation?

Horror cinema had many sources and cannot be seen as the straightforward inheritor of ‘tradition’ from Chaney’s silent melodramas. However, I contend that the way in which

marketing and the trade press connected horror to his films, as one apparent precedent, was crucial – that *Dracula* and *Frankenstein* took on the *controversy* around “horror” as a source of audience pleasure, and made it the prioritised selling point of a film. Genrification of “horror”, journey from adjective to marketing category, involved wholesale adoption of this language of controversy, right down to its vocabulary.

The marketing of *Dracula* and *Frankenstein* appears to negotiate this potential problem by successfully selling the idea that horror was bold and daring. It was doing something that had not been done before, since Chaney’s mystery thrillers had not been promoted or sequelised for the ‘horror’ critics identified in them. Yet it was also building on past successes, citing Chaney’s successful films, and especially his work for Universal and with Tod Browning, but crucially citing them as respectable past successes, not controversies. This strategy was an attempt to grapple with the fact that horror cycle films were centrally selling content and spectatorial experiences which were controversial and problematic, as well as potentially appealing and commercially successful.

In section 2.1 of this chapter, I described the “Warn the Nervous” strategy which *Frankenstein*’s marketing much relied upon, and specifically how this strategy aims to persuade by apparently dissuading. Various articles in the *Frankenstein* press book expand on the theory behind this line of marketing, for the benefit of exhibitors. They clarify how as well as enticing, this was a means to deal with real potential controversy and public criticism of the film’s horror. A series of suggestions entitled “How to Sell It” in the *Frankenstein* press book advises:

“DRACULA” is the tip-off for “FRANKENSTEIN” ... sell it for what it is ... don’t mince words ... don’t be afraid of its punch ... capitalise on it ...”⁴⁹

The supposed honesty and frankness of this approach was a key point, as the advice above not to “mince words” suggests. The studio explained the reasoning behind the lobby warning sign I described in 2.1 (which warned those with weak hearts or nerves not to see *Frankenstein*) like this:

It will have the effect of challenging the nervous ones who will be all the more anxious to see it and will serve to whet the curiosity of the rest of the public. Also it will be an honest means of avoiding any unfavorable reaction from anyone. **It is suggested that your**

ushers be provided with smelling salts for people who get over-excited on seeing "Frankenstein." [bold type from original article]⁵⁰

As I have already discussed, such warnings were chiefly intended to fascinate and arouse curiosity. However, this article explains another important part of the function of this "honest" marketing line. It was intended to forestall the tipping over of recoil beyond what spectators could take by allowing those with less fascination but sufficient recoil a chance to leave, rather than undergo the experience, rejecting it and protesting against it.

Another point to be made concerning this article is the supposition that "the nervous ones" would be already drawn to *Frankenstein* – warnings would only make them "all the more anxious to see it." This indirectly echoes the claims of 1920s criticism of horror in films, that those who enjoyed it or were eager for it were morbid and neurotic, a pathologised minority. *Frankenstein's* marketing also attempts to begin a re-evaluation of morbidity. Another article from the press book notes that "strange as it seems, a tremendous number of people get all excited by murder trials, ghastly accidents, sensational love crimes and monstrosities of all sorts."⁵¹ The morbid-minded here are no longer that psychologically abnormal *minority*, but a large proportion of implicitly normal people. In the light of *Frankenstein* and *Dracula's* success and the growing media awareness of a horror trend, such morbidity was normalised somewhat. The relatively conservative *Motion Picture Herald* comments with resignation in its review of *Frankenstein*:

Morbidity is not without its claim to high place among humanity's respectable emotional interests. "Frankenstein" merely takes advantage of this paradoxical delight in being horrified.⁵²

Throughout the period in which the horror cycle was fashionable, pro-horror critics and studio marketing would cite fundamental human tendencies to morbidity as explanations for the appeal of horror. Conversely, as we will see in the remaining chapters of this thesis, anti-horror critics would return to the idea that horror appealed to the abnormally morbid, the neurotic – and even that horror film spectatorship exacerbated morbid and neurotic tendencies in such "nervous", fascinated horror filmgoers.

Another piece from the *Frankenstein* press book, titled "Frankenstein Editors Experimenting with Thrills: Previews Determine How Far They Can Go with the Strong

Meat of James Whale's Production", provides more insight into the "warn the nervous" marketing line:

... The editing of "Frankenstein" has been no mean task. It is somewhat akin to riding a bucking broncho or bidding for a slam with only three aces in your hand. The trick is to see how much an audience will stand. According to several previews, they will stand a lot of the strong meat and monster food of which "Frankenstein" was made.

...
The film cutters thought they had too much for audiences to endure. They got a new insight into the capacity of the amusement public for thrills. This audience ate it up. Two more previews were required before the amazed film editors were satisfied that they dared leave the picture as Whale had made it. But now the last preview is over and soon[town name supposed to be inserted here] will see "Frankenstein" in all the fullness of a picture which was designed expressly to out-dracula "Dracula".

While touting *Frankenstein's* extremity, this article makes a counter-point suggestive of the trade press angle on horror, that its orchestration is a tricky business, and an affective misfire could easily cause audiences to reject it. This article seems to suggest that Universal at least were highly aware of this issue, and part of the purpose of "warn the nervous" marketing was to attempt to deal with it.

This seems to be confirmed by the prologue added to *Frankenstein* halfway through the film's cinematic run, following substantial local censorship difficulties which I shall detail in my next chapter. It consists of a speech given to camera by Edward Van Sloan (who played Professor Waldman, and had played Van Helsing in *Dracula*), out of character, in front of a stage curtain. The prologue attempts to cover the studio's back against the real censorship problems the film had run into, while simultaneously doing service as an efficient piece of hyperbolic advertising for the pleasurable terrors to come:

How do you do? Mr. Carl Laemmle feels it would be a little unkind to present this picture without just a word of friendly warning. We are about to unfold the story of Frankenstein, a man of science who sought to create a man after his own image without reckoning upon God. It is one of the strangest tales ever told. It deals with the two great mysteries of creation - life and death. I think it will *thrill* you. It may *shock* you. It might even - *horrify* you. So if any of you feel that you do not care to subject your nerves to such a strain, now's your chance to - uh, well, we warned you.⁵³

This speech clearly imitates the style of Van Sloan's similar epilogue to *Dracula*, in which the actor, speaking lines taken directly from Balderston's Broadway play *Dracula*, gives supposedly unnerved spectators the mock-reassurance that they should "just pull yourself together and remember that after all there *are* such things."⁵⁴ *Dracula's* epilogue had adopted the style of a responsible disclaimer in order to give the audience a final

shudder; *Frankenstein's* prologue in turn adopted the kidding, sensationalist style of the *Dracula* epilogue to offer a genuine studio disclaimer without missing a last chance to work up audience expectations for the film.

I have suggested in this chapter, and in this section in particular, that controversy was a fundamental part of horror as it was initially genrified, as it developed into a marketing and production category in the form of a film cycle. The article above sheds light on why Universal might engage so readily with such a potentially controversial production trend – one, in fact, based on selling films for supposedly unprecedented amounts of “strong meat and monster food” proven to be controversial. *Dracula*, as I discussed in my introduction, made so much money at the box office that it may have kept Universal in business in the difficult year of 1931. Whether film cycles built upon sensation and controversy were good for the industry in the long term was another question. Censorship advocates argued that the studios frequently chose short-term popularity over long-term bad publicity for the industry as whole. The censorship debate tended to contest this issue via controversial cycles like horror, as we shall see in the next chapter.

2.5 Horror promotion, anti-horror criticism

In the last section, I argued that the marketing of the incipient horror cycle in 1931 relied increasingly on a double-edged tactic of “warning the nervous” by promoting horror films’ extremity, which drew the new cycle further into a close relationship with controversy. Here I want to explore further a notable feature displayed by marketing trends throughout the cycle: the close relationship of horror marketing and anti-horror criticism and censorship.

Horror publicity and promotion tended to stress the unique and extreme affective experience that horror films offered spectators. Indeed, the successful marketing of horror on the strength of such affective extremity arguably played a part in confirming and furthering its central place in future horror production. Perhaps understandably, given the term's origins as a derogatory critical description, horror marketing shared with anti-horror campaigning much of its vocabulary and some significant recurring ideas

about horror spectatorship. Indeed, there were various points at which these two discourses are seen to be in dialogue, and at which anti-horror campaigning and the marketing of horror films benefited from each other's publicity. This situation arguably naturally grew from the horror cycle's dependence on a degree of controversy as a 'guarantee' of the pleasurable extremity and shock it offered.

Horror, like many kinds of film in the 1930s, was heavily and creatively promoted. Studios and cinemas courted the reduced audiences of the Depression with increasing desperation, not only with the content of their films but with heavy promotions ranging from free raffles and even cash prizes to inventive and often ludicrous publicity stunts - "ballyhoo" - aimed at charming people into the picture houses.⁵⁵ Press books aimed at local newspapers and magazines talked up every sensational angle they could; manuals aimed at exhibitors detailed page after page of marketing stunts and advertising ideas. The press book for *The Devil Doll* opens with the following proclamation filling a page in large letters: "The cry is for novelty! Here it is!!" Meanwhile, that for *The Mask of Fu Manchu* boasts to exhibitors:

Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer has made another scoop in obtaining Sax Rohmer's new thriller, "The Mask of Fu Manchu" for the screen. Here is the acme of weird, fantastic, eerie screen thrills. This press-sheet's posters, heralds, window-cards and various accessories are designed by showmanship minds to catch and hold the public interest. The wise exploiter will make the most of them. Plug the picture! Advertise! And watch the box-office returns roll in!⁵⁶

In my last section, I argued that horror marketing in 1931 tended to focus a great deal of energy on claims about the affective and sensational experience which a horror film offered. This trend continued throughout the more established cycle. The manual for 1934's *Mark of the Vampire* proclaims on its first page "THERE'S MONEY IN CHILLS!" Catchlines for most horror films boasted about extreme sensation and affect, and frequently promised to outdo and go further than their predecessors in the cycle. To give a few typical examples, catchlines for *Mark of the Vampire* proclaimed, "It will haunt you for hours!" and "Breath-Taking! ... Blood-curdling! ... Bizarre Beyond Belief!" In 1936 *The Devil Doll* was advertised as "The strangest story the screen has ever told!" while in the same year *Mad Love* managed "Too terrible to tell! You must SEE it!", "Soon 'The Thing' tired of pity ... and demanded - love", and the following:

"The Phantom of the Opera"

"The Hunchback of Notre Dame
"Dracula" and "Frankenstein"
Now .. the sensation of them all –
"THE HANDS OF ORLAC"⁵⁷

Promotion devices included the well known and frequently-repeated ones of audience "plants" hired to scream and faint, and supposed registered nurses stationed in cinema foyers. The Branford theatre in Newark went one better than this when showing *Bride of Frankenstein*, offering customers the guarantee that "there will always be physicians present to attend to those overcome with fright."⁵⁸ A Kansas City Theatre showing *White Zombie* in 1932, advertising the film locally as "a picture for strong hearts", handed 'Faint Cards' to customers entering the theatre, "which notified them that should they faint while witnessing the show that the card would admit bearer to a later performance."⁵⁹ *Variety* commented approvingly that it was "a neat trick and drew smiles", an indication that such stunts may have been meant more to create sensation, drama and a sense of expectation than to be taken completely seriously. There were many more original stunts along these lines, like fake kidnapping notes dropped on the street; knife-throwers and other performers in cinema lobbies and on streets; "ballyhoo trucks" with people in costume on the back driving around town, along with competitions, inventive media puff pieces and elaborate lobby displays. Hyperbole and above all sensation were the watchwords.⁶⁰

While horror films were regularly sold on the strength of such supposedly intense affective experiences, claims about similar experiences formed the chief objection to the cycle of critics and campaigners who opposed it – as horror's origins as a genre term would suggest. As I mentioned, examination of the phrasing of individual complaints and incidents often shows them to have significantly similar vocabulary and ideas concerning horror to horror advertising itself. For instance, in July 1935, the *New York Times* published a letter of complaint about *Mark of the Vampire* from a doctor, William J. Robinson, who claimed that:

Several people have come to my notice who, after seeing that horrible picture, suffered nervous shock, were attacked with insomnia, and those who did fall asleep were tortured by most horrible nightmares.⁶¹

Robinson offered complaints about horror spectatorship's negative psychological effects which, as I will elaborate in Chapter Four, were very prevalent in anti-horror criticism and censorship campaigning. However, as my argument above would suggest, the press

book for *Mark of the Vampire* itself contains similar vocabulary and ideas about horror spectatorship, but phrased as positive advertisements. The tag lines quoted above boast about *Mark of the Vampire* as a “breath-taking” and “blood-curdling” film, whose intense and disturbing emotional effects will “haunt you for hours.” Besides these tag-lines, the same press book suggested local cinemas stage a promotional stunt typical of horror exploitation’s more theatrical side, designed to suggest the perilously intense emotional reaction spectators might experience while watching *Mark of the Vampire*:

If you think you can get away with it, you might arrange to have a girl “planted” in your audience at the first showing of the picture, with instructions to scream and faint at the most opportune moment. Girl would then be carried or assisted out of the theatre, ostensibly to receive medical attention.

A stunt of this nature, if cleverly handled, should create a great deal of comment and perhaps result in a newspaper “break”.⁶²

This stunt, again not uncommonly for horror exploitation, aimed at best to generate in such a “newspaper ‘break’” a manageable local controversy or talking point whose heat would flatter the film’s ability to terrify and disturb spectators. In other words, alarmist press coverage like Dr. Robinson’s could in some circumstances be as good publicity as theatres exhibiting *Mark of the Vampire* might wish for.

Such cases were not uncommon: controversy and anti-horror campaigning raised the media profile of individual films, and marketing and campaigning echoed each others’ statements on a film’s affective power, even its capacity to have a damaging or traumatic nervous effect. For instance, in 1935, *Variety*’s local reporter in Kansas City commented casually on how a local newspaper campaign against *Bride of Frankenstein* had effectively promoted the film and increased ticket sales: the papers “went after the ‘Frankenstein’ picture at the Tower and warned against children seeing it, while the *Journal-Post* critic scored the management for admitting children so biz way up.”⁶³

Much horror advertising and promotion, as we have seen, took open advantage of the ground it shared with anti-horror campaigning and the basic interdependence of such spectatorial attraction and repulsion. Horror film advertising, as I have noted in the last chapter, often adopted a tone of warning, as with the mentioned advertising of *White Zombie* in 1932 as a “picture for strong hearts”. Such warnings were also challenges, daring spectators to see the film in question. They also did double-duty as purportedly

genuine warnings inserted to placate censorship campaigners. *Variety*'s report of *Murders in the Rue Morgue*'s box office fortunes in Chicago in early 1932 provides another example of the repeated intersection of the discourses of advertising and anti-horror campaigning which an individual horror film might encounter:

Campaign on this one almost paralleled the advertising for 'Frankenstein', warning light sleepers to stay away. Like the 'Frankenstein' work, this is an 'adults only' presentation. Censors got excited about the film, and at first banned it entirely. Last-minute rescreening and negotiations got the film through.⁶⁴

The citation of *Frankenstein* and its marketing here is significant. *Murders* adopted the "warn the nervous" advertising used so successfully by the former film, and by doing so also adopted the relationship with real controversy it entailed. The "warn the nervous" strategy baited anti-horror campaigning with boasts of a film's terrible content and emotional effects, but also held it at bay by the supposedly responsible act of openly declaring its nature.

Hyperbolic "warning" prologues like the one added to *Frankenstein* part-way through its cinema run were occasionally used in this manner. Prologues were also added to *Freaks* and *Bride of Frankenstein*, as placatory gestures to censors and campaigners which hoped to draw away controversy by offering a warning of the sensational content, and pointing up the film's moral framework. Universal also offered to add a foreword to *Murders in the Rue Morgue* to appease British Columbia's disapproving board of censors.⁶⁵ Prologues to horror films might even be said to exemplify the recurring dilemma for horror producers, studio publicists and local exhibitors which "warn the nervous" marketing attempted to handle: managing real controversy and opposition while successfully drawing audiences on the strength of the very qualities that caused such opposition.

In this chapter, I have argued that horror, as it first emerged as a genre category, centred on the valorisation of kinds of affective experiences previously treated by many critics as negative rather than pleasurable. Thus the horror cycle necessarily incorporated controversy, and as we shall see in the next chapter, its controversy was the most major factor in the cycle's development. Its inherent controversy meant the cycle was dogged by the negative connotations of horror as a critical term, which quickly and persistently manifested itself in anti-horror campaigning and various kinds of censorship. Neither of these issues could be easily disposed of because they arose directly out of the

discourses through which studios promoted the cycle, and with which the trade and mainstream press discussed it.

Chapter Three: “Too terrible to tell! You must SEE it!”: the Role of Controversy and Censorship in the developing horror cycle

In my last chapter, I explored how a relationship with controversy was ‘built into’ horror as an emergent genre category which took its name from a derogatory critical term. Controversy became interdependent with cycle’s appeal, and a key part of the marketing of the cycle.

In this chapter I discuss how the wider, urgent contemporary debate about cinema and censorship was quickly brought into orbit with the horror cycle’s controversy. As a result, the cycle itself was drawn into a critical dialogue with independent cinema campaigning, local censor boards, and the industry’s internal censorship, in the form of the Studio Relations Committee.

This relationship with controversy became the chief limiting factor in the cycle’s development. Horror’s content and affective aims did not, as the Studio Relations Committee initially feared, get more and more extreme as the cycle progressed. In fact, controversy limited it in two key ways. To some degree, horror was self-limiting, as I explore by examining *Freaks* and its spectacular failure. This case suggest that the trade press had been correct to estimate that strategies of moderation and control were as important as extremities of content in order to elicit a pleasurable “emotional horror kick”, rather than repulsion and rejection, from a mass audience.

I furthermore suggest that such strategies of moderation were encouraged, even partially enforced, by the Studio Relations Committee’s policy towards negotiating the content of horror films. The responses of local censorship boards to individual horror films provide ample evidence that the SRC’s policy of moderation failed to deal preventatively with the cycle’s censorship issues. The SRC’s horror censorship policy was not consistently successful or adequate from the perspective of their own interests. In fact, its reliance on moderation certainly influenced the cycle and arguably conserved its affective qualities, and therefore both its box office appeal and its controversy, were constructed.

3.1 The “sin which attracts” and the “sin which repels”: horror and the parameters of the 1930 Production Code

As I mentioned in Chapter One, many later horror films and cycles after the 1930s have had comparable relationships with media controversy and censorship, and with polarised and extreme reactions from different spectators and audiences.¹ However, I wish to emphasise that a comparable relationship is not an identical one. The relationship between the 1930s horror cycle and controversy played out in particular cultural sites, in a specific cultural moment. The developmental effect of media and cultural controversy on the horror cycle was shaped by its historical and cultural conditions: and in particular, by 1930s Hollywood’s wider relationship with controversy and with a growing censorship and anti-cinema lobby, as I have outlined in my Introduction.

Although both local boards and censorship campaigners frequently objected to horror, it presented particular methodological problems for them. Firstly, since the Code was written in 1930, it made no mention in its closing list of specific subjects of horror as such. Although the Production Code was supposed to be universal enough to be applied to any new censorship problem, horror’s absence from the Code would itself make the SRC’s power over it initially ambiguous. Moreover, horror’s censorable qualities did not tend to fall easily within the categories into which the Code divided censorship problems. The overarching rationale, models and methods which censors and campaigners relied upon for such films could therefore be difficult to adapt to horror. As I will again argue in my next chapter, the visual model of “gruesomeness” around which the SRC and PCA based their horror censorship practices was ultimately ineffectual as regards controlling horror films’ affective content.

The latter and more specific part of the Code deals largely with representations of sex, and secondarily with crime, and makes no mention at all of horror – in fact, none of the Code does. The Code was written before the initial horror craze of 1931-32, and, as I have discussed in my last chapter, horror was first constituted as a genre category in 1931. However, the section on principles of plot construction and the later mention of crime arguably helped shape the Production Code Administration’s later horror censorship, and define some of its problems. Emphasising the central role of film’s emotional affect in its moral effects, the Code’s section on principles of plot notes that to

have a positive moral effect and avoid a negative one, cinema must avoid both moral ambivalence and the presentation of vice as attractive:

(1) No plot theme should definitely side *with evil and against good*.

...

(3) No plot should be so constructed as to leave the question of *right or wrong in doubt or fogged*.

(4) No plot should by its treatment *throw the sympathy* of the audience with sin, crime, wrong-doing or evil.

(5) No plot should present evil alluringly.

Following this, a distinction is noted between “*sin* which by its nature *repels*, and *sin* which by its nature *attracts*.” In the former category comes “murder, most theft, most legal crimes, lying, hypocrisy, cruelty, etc.” and in the latter “sex sins, sins and crimes of apparent heroism, such as banditry, daring thefts, leadership in evil, organised crime, revenge, etc.”

This reasoning provides the basic framework from which the Studio Relations Committee (and later the Production Code Administration) might condemn horror. As we will see, although the Production Code allowed much room for ambiguity of presentation (or “innocent” and “sophisticated” readings of potentially troublesome situations), it left remarkably little room for any ambivalence in the spectator’s *reaction*. Sin which repels and sin which attracts are, for the Code as written, incompatible opposites. There is thus no allowing for a dynamic of attraction and repulsion such as that which the trade press and studio marketing claimed to operate in horror’s affect, or more broadly what the Code briefly terms “morbid curiosity”². It is, however, made clear in the Code that such a dynamic would be unacceptable in a film or spectator’s response, by the condemnation of “fogging” of moral position and of any attractiveness in “sin” or transgression. However, the strong implication that such “morbidly” is counter-intuitive or even impossible would, as we will see, place the Code’s administrators in an awkward position when dealing with a genre like horror, which relied upon it.

In the specific sections of the Code dealing with the representation of crime, there are two major concerns. Firstly, presentation of crime must not incite imitative behaviour, either through heroic presentation of criminals or through presenting in detail methods (of burglary, for instance) which might be copied by cinemagoers. The second concern is to prevent “the hardening of the audiences ... to murder, cruelty, brutality, and repellent

crimes” – to avoid desensitising audiences to crimes which they would naturally find unattractive. These two concerns correspond with the Code’s twin focus on the presentation of “sin which repels” and “sin which attracts”. The Code of 1930, with its overwhelming concern with sex and with imitative responses in audiences, fails to account for the potential importance of “morbid curiosity” as an attractive quality, or to anticipate the degree to which the horror and gangster genres in particular would mix ambivalence and morbidity. Moreover, while the Code’s theory of cinema spectatorship and film effects devotes much attention to affect, especially over the attraction of “sin” and the emotional intensity of cinemagoing, there is no mention of or concern for reactions of ambivalence or attraction-repulsion.

When the horror craze brought the genre to censor attention in the early 1930s, immediate reactions of censorship advocates focused on the effect of morbid material on the “nerves.” The forging of a contemporary censorship line on horror, especially for the Production Code Administration, would mean reworking arguments over horror’s affect and effects in a manner consistent with the contemporary film censorship debate. As will be seen, this meant occasional significant departures from the critical reasoning of the contemporary censorship campaign.

Early censorship of horror was in fact dominated by a failure to agree on what and where precisely its censorable qualities were in a film, and much of this can arguably be traced back to the Code itself. While certain aspects of the Code and of contemporary censorship reasoning sow the seeds for horror censorship, the Code’s general model cannot be applied to existing discourses of horror affect in a straightforward way. Indeed, certain aspects of its model of cinema as an art form cannot account for the popularity of horror within the terms in which contemporary sources discuss it, and serve almost to make it unreadable within the Code’s schemata.

The history of the 1930s horror cycle’s controversy, then, was largely played out through the struggles of different agencies to analyse it, to integrate it into wider models of cinema and censorship, and indeed to assert their own voices in the increasingly crowded and vociferous contemporary debate over cinema and censorship. The urgency of this debate in 1930s American culture undoubtedly played a substantial part in the corresponding critical urgency of discussion of the horror cycle’s objectionable qualities, and its future. In particular, the gradual rise in dominance of the SRC and PCA as

regulators of cinema content meant they were a crucial influence on the cycle in a way that would not have been true of a film cycle of 1925. As I will argue in my next chapter, the *nature* of the influence they exerted changed as their analysis of horror became more successful. However, despite their lesser power over the cinema industry in 1931, they still exerted a substantial, consistent influence over the cycle from its beginnings.

3.2 Controversy in the emergent horror cycle, 1931-1932: why were the Studio Relations Committee's strategies inadequate?

Horror took the Studio Relations Committee by surprise. Unmentioned in the Production Code, it was nevertheless, from *Dracula* onwards, immediately singled out as troublesome by both campaigners and local censors. When the SRC became fully aware of the new cycle's popularity and consistent censorship difficulties, they expressed a desire to moderate it or even curtail it. However, they experienced great difficulty in keeping pace with the nature and range of independent campaigners' and local boards' objections to horror, for reasons I will suggest below.

While *Dracula* was not censored by every state board (Maryland, Virginia, New York, Michigan, and Kansas all passed the film uncut) a number of the stricter censor boards intervened in matters of gruesomeness and morbidity. Massachusetts cut shots of insects and of a skeleton in a coffin; Chicago cut the choking of Renfield and his scream, and Dracula's scream as he is staked off-screen in the final sequence of the film. In Canada, Vancouver threatened to make cuts, and British Columbia's Board of Censors raised objections which caused the MPPDA more protracted difficulties. They asked for cuts of the shot of one of Dracula's brides rising from her coffin, of the cries of the children Lucy attacks, and of portions of Renfield's dialogue concerning eating flies and rat's blood. The range of these cuts suggests that gruesomeness was not just a particular kind of violence, but also took in other kinds of morbid and horrific content. When the MPPDA attempted to keep the film intact, British Columbia's Board of Censors responded by banning the film outright,³ but not without making clear their reasons for doing so:

The eliminations suggested by Board of Censors on account of the unwholesome and gruesome effect, which in their opinion would be injurious to nervous women and children, and totally unnecessary to the strength of the picture, were refused acceptance by the Exchange; therefore the picture stands REJECTED.⁴

As we have seen, the studios, trade and mainstream press would all disagree strongly with the Board of Censors' opinion that *Dracula's* "gruesome" qualities were "unnecessary to the strength of the picture." However, these comments actually display a somewhat developed awareness of the possible negative effects of horror. They locate its censorship issues in its (presumably emotional) effects, which may be psychologically injurious to those with more easily damaged nerves. This is suggestive, considering that these comments were made in April, when horror was barely emerging as a generic term. These comments evoke those attached to horror in its prehistory as a negative, non-generic critical term, and show that these connotations quickly attached to *Dracula* as a film full of horror, even while it was in the process of becoming seen as a "horror film" as such.

Dracula's early censorship history in fact displays an intriguing contrast of attitudes between different agencies. While local censorship boards (and, as we will see, independent campaigners) already possessed not only decided objections to horror, but in some cases a relatively developed argument about its negative effects, the Studio Relations Committee had anticipated very few objections to *Dracula*, and in fact had passed the film uncut. Universal had consulted the SRC concerning *Dracula* throughout the filmmaking process. In June 1930, E. M. Asher of Universal Studios wrote to Colonel Joy asking for the censorship angle on Bram Stoker's novel *Dracula*, and on the stage adaptation by Hamilton Deane. The studio then sent the committee two drafts of the script, and also showed them the finished film before release. The only time during all these consultations that the SRC intervened or criticised any aspect of *Dracula's* content was to ask for two small changes to its script, neither of them related to horror content. An alteration of a reference to "Napoleons, Mussolinis and suchlike" as "loonies" was amended to less politically controversial references from classical history, and a reference to Van Helsing as a "thick-headed Dutchman" was removed.⁵

All the evidence suggests that the SRC did not treat *Dracula's* elements of horror as displaying any censorship problems, and neither did they anticipate any specific

problems with local censors. On January 9 1931, Joy wrote to Laemmle, approving the film without any reservation:

We enjoyed seeing "DRACULA" at the studio this morning and believe it is quite satisfactory from the standpoint of the Code and, as far as we are able to predict, from the standpoint of local censorship.⁶

-

An SRC synopsis dated 14th January notes similarly that the "picture contains nothing to which the censors could reasonably object", and a review of the trailer made on 28th January notes that it "contains nothing reasonably censorable". Like the absence of specific mention of horror as a censorship problem in the Production Code, this would initially seem to have a very simple explanation. Horror, as I have mentioned, was scarcely emerging as a generic term and as a cycle in early 1931. However, the comments of British Columbia's Board of Censors suggest that they already understood "gruesomeness" to be problematic fictional material. The SRC could only raise substantial objections to films within the limits of category and reasoning imposed by the Production Code. Independent critics and campaigners, including local censor boards, were much more free in the arguments they could draw upon, and were easily able to make use of the arguments that had attached to horror in its incarnation as a critical term against horror as an emergent kind of film.

However, other material from *Dracula's* examination by the SRC suggests that there were other reasons besides this for this apparent gap of understanding between independent censorship and the SRC. The Hays Office recruited previewers from various independent censorship campaigning groups to watch and comment on films. The reports they made on *Dracula* give us valuable information about the reaction of censorship advocates outside the SRC. Significantly, they made a number of highly charged objections to the film which made use of existing arguments against horror as a quality, in the same way the British Columbia Board of Censors had done:

I am sorry that I cannot see one redeeming feature in this picture. It is the most horrible thing I have ever seen. The author must have had a distorted mind. I cannot speak too strongly against this picture for children. It would be a crime to allow a child to see such a gruesome, hideous [*sic*], ghastly, horrible nightmare!"

...

It is unwholesome and ghastly, morbid, inhuman and pointless. In this day of high pressure living, strained nerves, and constant excitement it seems too bad that such pictures with the strong influence on the emotions should be allowed a showing anywhere. I feel that it is completely undesirable for adults and very harmful in its influence over children and young people ...

...
It is no [sic] honest opinion that this picture should be protested by every previewing organisation. Its [sic] insane horrible details shown to millions of impressionable children, to adults already bowed down with human misery, will do an infinite amount of harm. To the better balanced it holds not one element of entertainment.

...
The only value this film has lies in the acting, direction, photography and sets – It is impossible for children, the sensitive, nervous woman and few men enjoy myths ...

...
I would like to add my protest to these. I know the theme of the picture and saw the first fifteen minutes of it and felt I could stand no more of it. I feel that it should be withdrawn from public showing, as children, weak minded and all classes attend motion pictures indiscriminately.⁷

Before examining why such fervent objections did not affect the SRC's approval of *Dracula*, it seems worthwhile to devote some attention to these reviewers' understanding of "gruesomeness" as a censorship issue. In these comments we can discern already much of the discourse of horror censorship, fully formed and noticeably congruent with horror's previous incarnation as a negative critical description. *Dracula* is troublesome because of its affective qualities, its "strong influence on the emotions." Its affect is decidedly unhealthy: while one previewer refers to the author's "distorted mind", others concentrate on its morbidity and "unwholesomeness", the effect of its "inane horrible details" on the nerves. The suggestion is made that the film is particularly psychologically harmful to certain types of vulnerable spectator, in particular women, children, the "weak minded" and the lower classes. It is also suggested by two of the reviews that horror film viewing might exacerbate the pressures and unhappiness of modern life in 1931.

The SRC's use of previewers from pro-censorship organisations was intended at least in part to help them anticipate objections. The previewers' comments, as we have seen, attempt to lodge strong demands for either *Dracula*'s banning or severe cuts for gruesomeness – demands congruent with the behaviour of those local censor boards which later objected to the film. So why in this particular case did the SRC ignore the previewers' protests, especially as they made use of established lines of argument? If the SRC were aware of these objections, why did *Dracula*'s later local censorship problems apparently come upon them unprepared? A comment from Lamar Trotti of the SRC, reviewing *Dracula*'s trailer, might help to explain. Approving the trailer, he notes that it:

conforms to Code and contains nothing reasonably censorable although this trailer seemed to me to promise to be a gruesome picture and one which I as a motion picture

fan would avoid seeing. One line in the trailer, for instance, spoken by the girl is that: "The Dracula opened a vein in his arm and made me drink his blood".⁸

Trotti's comment clearly implies that gruesomeness, personally objectionable or not, was considered outside the SRC's purview. With good reason: the SRC, as a body, was set up to administer the Production Code and to intercede for the film industry in local censorship disputes. Any criticism of content had to be based on stipulations in the Code or on the censorship difficulties of previous films, and preferably on both. Maltby notes how films often exploited this by adhering to the letter of the Code but violating its spirit, forcing the SRC to constantly evaluate the boundaries of their jurisdiction.⁹

Of course, local censors and independent campaigners were not forced to draw such distinctions between that which was offensive and that which was reasonably censorable. They could operate more flexibly, drawing their reasoning in individual cases, as they did with horror, from established objections to other forms and from extra-cinematic moral, political and religious discourses, rather than just from the censorship histories of previous films. The architects of the Code, as we shall see, had hoped it would be a set of unchanging basic principles which could guide an evolving and adaptable censorship policy through any number of new genres, cycles and censorship troubles. Administering it as such, and anticipating the objections of less constrained independent censors, would require a body rather more proactive than the SRC were in 1931.

The public release of *Dracula*, its vast success, and its first difficulties with local censors and advocacy groups prompted the SRC to begin reconsidering the importance of "gruesomeness" as a censorship problem. A sharp learning curve can be discerned over SRC correspondence covering the production and release of the first three films of the horror cycle, *Dracula*, *Frankenstein*, and *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, which spans the period from June 1930 to April 1932.

By December 1931, the SRC had begun to realise that they were facing a cycle based around the quality of horror and gruesomeness as a box office draw – and therefore a cycle problematic *in itself*. Colonel Joy noted to Carl Laemmle Jr., after having read *Frankenstein's* script, that:

... the only incidents in it to be concerned about are the gruesome ones which will certainly bring about an audience reaction of horror. We think that you ought to keep thoroughly in mind during the production of this picture that the telling of a story with a theme as gruesome as this will not permit the use of superlative incidents of the same character. Therefore, consideration should be given to scene A-12 showing the body of the hanged man, and scene H-4 showing the dwarf hanging by a chain; and the several other gruesome incidents which make up a part of the script.¹⁰

The term "consideration" is ambiguous, more of a vague warning than a firm request for deletion. In the event, a comparison of the shooting script with the finished film shows that the only result of Joy's warnings seems to have been the showing of Fritz's corpse only in silhouette. Silhouettes and shadows, as we will see, would become a common tactic of compromise in the horror cycle, and but not one which tended to placate local censors. An additional request to amend Henry Frankenstein's blasphemous line "Now I know what it feels like to be God!" was also ignored. *Frankenstein*, however, contained nothing contrary to the Code. The finished film was approved by the SRC, despite the fact that the gruesome elements had not been toned down, although the approval came with a warning proviso: "unless some of the official censor boards consider it gruesome, [it is] reasonably free from censorship action."¹¹

However, *Frankenstein's* local censorship difficulties were far more substantial than those of *Dracula*. Massachusetts made thirteen cuts in the film for Sunday viewing, mostly for violence, and revised these after negotiation to five cuts: Frankenstein's infamous line "Now I know what it feels like to be God", Fritz's hanging body, the Monster attempting to choke Frankenstein and later Dr. Waldman, and the drowning of Maria. New York shortened several scenes: Fritz's taunting of the Monster, a shot of a hypodermic needle, and the drowning of Maria. Pennsylvania cut the grave-robbing scene heavily, as well as Frankenstein's "God" line and Maria's drowning. Ontario cut the "God" line. Chicago, surprisingly, made no cuts.¹²

The film encountered even more severe problems in Kansas, Quebec and several small towns in Massachusetts. On 10th December 1931, soon after the film's release, T. B. Fithian of Universal wrote to Joy regarding the Kansas State Censor Board's eliminations, a total of thirty-three separate cuts which included a number of entire, pivotal scenes: including much of the creation scene, the killings of Fritz, Dr. Waldman, and Maria, the threatening of Elizabeth and most of Frankenstein's climactic struggle

with the creature in the windmill. A note attached to the list of cuts by the Kansas board gives the reasons: "1. Cruelty 2. Tends to debase morals".

Fithian complained, understandably, that "these deletions destroy all the dramatic power of the picture and Junior urgently requests you to do anything you can to have these cuts re-considered."¹³ Joy watched *Frankenstein* (which he notes in a resumé that he had not yet personally seen) and then "talked for a half hour with Kansas censors for the purpose of persuading them to lift the ban on this production". After Kansas passed *Frankenstein* on the 17th December, 1931, Joy noted that "this news will be happily received by the other companies too, because the trade papers carried the word of the original rejection which created a wave of acrimonious anti-censor feeling among the folks of the industry."¹⁴ *Variety* had covered the controversy the previous week in a strongly worded article entitled "Kans. Women Censors Ruin 'Frankenstein.'"¹⁵ Horror was beginning to have an impact on the wider censorship debate.

Getting *Frankenstein* passed in Quebec occupied Universal and the SRC for the first months of 1932. Objections were on the grounds not of gruesomeness, but of *Frankenstein's* blasphemous transgression in creating life, "it being a dogma of the Catholic Church that only God can create." After various consultations with Canadian Catholic priests, Universal decided to insert Edward Van Sloan's prologue to the film, spoken to the camera, which explicitly glosses *Frankenstein's* presumptuous ambition "to create a man after his own image without reckoning upon God" as sinful.¹⁶

In April 1932, Fithian wrote to Joy again asking for the SRC's intervention in "several towns in Massachusetts", two of which had banned *Frankenstein* and *Murders in the Rue Morgue*, and another two which had banned the latter film only. "We feel these represent a sufficient potential revenue to do whatever we can to have these pictures released in those markets," Fithian complained. *Frankenstein*, and horror in general, had become Universal's biggest source of revenue in the last year, and the studio was understandably keen that censorship did not damage this new source of badly needed revenue.¹⁷

Paramount's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, released just after *Frankenstein*, did not encounter quite so many local censor problems, but its censorship history is nevertheless informative. Paramount was co-operative during pre-production, sending several drafts

of the script to the SRC for reviewing. The SRC asked for numerous cuts to the second draft of the script, and from the finished film it appears that most of them were made. However, explaining these, the committee do not speak of gruesomeness and horror but of sexual suggestiveness and brutality:

Our chief concern is with regard to some of the dialogue and action incidental to Hyde's characterisation which may appear to a portion of the public, as well as to the censors, as being overly brutal and at times somewhat too suggestive. We realise that the nature of the story necessitates the portrayal of evil and it is possible for this reason you may find it possible to go a step further in both dialogue and action than would ordinarily be the case. However, we are of the opinion that the following material may be looked upon as being "over the line" and we therefore suggest that you give it some further consideration with a view to toning it down as much as possible:

As with *Frankenstein*, the SRC here approached a potentially problematic film by trying to tone it down by attention to individual incidents. Most of the cuts suggested were for sexual references and dialogue, two for blasphemous swearing, and two for violence (the scene of Ivy being beaten by a customer, and another of Hyde dropping a kitten in a river).¹⁸ Hyde's "brutality" towards Ivy is frequently sexual, and among the dialogue the SRC asked to be toned down are several sadistic verbal threats of rape and assault. These concerns, which fell firmly within the remit of the Production Code, seem initially to have edged out the more marginal issue of horror. Viewing the finished film later on, though, the SRC issued warnings which suggested much more that they were in mind of previous horror films. They also paid attention to mitigating factors which they hoped might overcome any controversy:

Because it is based on a literary classic the public and the censors may overlook the horrors which result from the realism of the Hyde make-up, though we are frank to say we cannot estimate what the reaction will be to this, or to the other horror pictures. Certainly we hope that the excellence of the production will offset any apprehension that the theme is too harrowing.¹⁹

While *Frankenstein*, too, is "based on a literary classic", *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*'s overtly Victorian period setting is much tighter than the former film's deliberately vague and occasionally rather modern setting. Elizabeth's short-skirted suit is clearly twentieth-century, while the peasants and the elder Baron Frankenstein seem to inhabit the nineteenth. *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, on the other hand, emphasises the Victorian angle by its methodically late nineteenth-century English costumes and sets and by its hanging the plot from period-specific debates concerning sexual morality and convention. *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*'s literary pedigree, and the expensive period drama staging which

played this up, did indeed seem to carry it past a number of potential censorship difficulties. For example, the Atlanta Better Films Committee graded it both A ("Very interesting") and M ("Mature Audience Only") on Acting, Entertainment Value, Plot, Photography, Educational Value and Moral Effect.²⁰

Although there were no major local censorship debacles like those which had affected *Frankenstein*, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* was cut by a number of the same censor boards. Most of the deletions were "suggestive" and "brutal" material along the lines of that about which the SRC had warned Paramount. The Kansas censor board shortened the sequence where Hyde chokes Ivy, and Massachusetts made various cuts for female nudity for Sunday showings. Chicago cut Ivy's undressing scene, various pieces of innuendo-laden dialogue, the choking scene and Hyde hitting an old man. *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*'s local censorship history broadly suggests that objections over the film's sexual themes seem to have taken some of the heat from its horror aspects, such as the transformation scenes mentioned by the SRC, and the deteriorating Hyde's stalking of Muriel in the final reel.

Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde's chief contribution to the censorship history of horror, however, was that its production, along with that of *Murders in the Rue Morgue* and *Freaks*, alerted the SRC that they definitely had an incipient horror cycle on their hands. They reacted with alarm. Colonel Joy wrote to Will Hays in December 1931:

Perhaps it would be wise to obtain an early estimate of the audience reaction and critical opinion concerning DRACULA and FRANKENSTEIN by Universal; DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE by Paramount; and ALMOST MARRIED by Fox, all of which are in distribution or are about to be distributed. Paramount has another "gruesome" picture about to be put into production and Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer has "FREAKS" which is about one half shot.

Is this the beginning of a cycle which ought to be retarded or killed? I am anxious to receive your advice.²¹

As we have seen, *Dracula*, *Frankenstein* and *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* were all substantial successes – and the first two were exceptional money-makers. Local censorship often retarded films' box-office takings, but given that horror's appeal and censorship problems stemmed from the same qualities, studios could afford to make the trade. Why, then, would the SRC continue to regard horror as a censorship issue? The Production Code, as we will see, was aimed at forestalling broader criticisms and campaigns against Hollywood. Pragmatic in this regard, it nevertheless also had a moral agenda. Horror,

like other controversial film cycles, was seen to affect the broader censorship debate, exacerbating hostility to Hollywood and independent campaigning for more draconian censorship methods. As the cycle progressed, and with it increasing recognition of horror as both attractive and censorable, Colonel Joy's staff would train on the horror film the SRC's policy of dealing with problematic elements by negotiating and moderating individual scenes, shots and lines of dialogue. This policy, rather than "retarding" the horror cycle, instead guided its development.

3.3 The limits of the horror cycle?: auto-censorship and the case of *Freaks*

In another letter concerning the horror cycle, from January 1932, Colonel Joy of the SRC writes to Will Hays that he has grave concerns that because "the supply of such stories is necessarily limited [this] will lead eventually to straining for more and more horror until the wave topples over and breaks."²² In early 1932, there was some reason to believe that both these assertions could be valid: the visual gruesomeness of new horror films was growing, as were their censorship problems. The horror films released during 1932 were demonstrably overall more explicit than those of 1931 in their use of visually gruesome elements, although the question of whether they were more affectively intense is more complex.

Horror films from 1932 show a trend towards amplification of their most obviously visually gruesome and extreme elements. Direct comparisons show that films like *Murders in the Rue Morgue*, *Island of Lost Souls* and *The Mask of Fu Manchu*, dealing with scenes similar in nature to ones from *Dracula*, *Frankenstein* and *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, showed more and employed their fade-outs later. For example, *Frankenstein* featured two implied operation scenes: the unseen one in which the Monster is created, and the prospective dissection which is curtailed by the Monster's murder of Dr. Waldman. *Island of Lost Souls*, adapted from a novel which draws heavily on Mary Shelley's novel *Frankenstein* and released less than a year later than Universal's film *Frankenstein*, also contains implied operations but is much more graphic in the information it gives us. The off-screen cries of Moreau's victims in the House of Pain, and the scene in which he is interrupted with a subject, give us more detail than *Frankenstein* does about the painful

and violating nature of Moreau's monstrous transformations. Likewise, *Frankenstein* raises spectatorial dread of the Monster's dissection with shots of Waldman's preparations, the neatly prepared, sheet-draped Monster, Waldman's impassive preparatory note and, most dreadful of all, a neat tray of medical implements. *Island of Lost Souls* ends with the rioting of the Beast-Men and their implied dissection of Moreau, but goes rather further in what it shows onscreen. We see the Beast-Men break into the House of Pain and violently overpower Moreau, before breaking into his cabinet of medical implements (rather more elaborately and cruelly outfitted than Waldman's collection) and crowding round him with their spoils. Only then does the film cut away from the scene. Scenes of implied torture and sexual assault in *Murders in the Rue Morgue*, *Island of Lost Souls* and *The Mask of Fu Manchu* continued for longer before fading out, and implied the nature of off-screen events and threatened events far more clearly through dialogue and action than did similar scenes in *Frankenstein* and *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*.

This kind of amplification was common in the development of film cycles. The joke from *Variety* which I quoted in my Introduction to this thesis makes a similar point, having a studio producer respond to the painter Whistler's proposal (an old woman sitting on a chair) with "Say, can't you have two old women?"²³

These films appear to bear out Joy's fears, and those of other censors and campaigners, in their reliance on a simple strategy of excess and increasingly visceral, explicit gruesomeness to outdo *Frankenstein* and *Dracula*. Such films, as follow-ups in a cycle, were in fact critical assessments how previous films, and horror itself, 'worked'. Films like *Murders in the Rue Morgue* and *Island of Lost Souls*, which contained more explicit sights of visual gruesomeness than *Dracula* and *Frankenstein* appear to have made the equation that this increased explicitness would produce a more affectively intense experience for spectators. All the 1932 films and scenes I have singled out, as we have seen, fell foul of local censor boards.

Can censorship and controversy be held responsible for curtailing this apparent development of horror towards increasing visual gruesomeness? One film in particular serves to illustrate how experimental extremity and the abandonment of strategies of ellipsis could result, in fact, in a horror film's *failure* with a mass audience: *Freaks*. One of the 1930s horror cycle's most notorious films, *Freaks* was also its most spectacular

financial failure. *Freaks* was commissioned by MGM's star producer, Irving Thalberg, who hired director Tod Browning fresh from his success with *Dracula*. A lavishly budgeted box office disaster which cost MGM \$316, 000 and lost \$164, 000,²⁴ it also received an unusually vitriolic critical panning and accrued a great deal of media controversy. Thalberg's biographer Bob Thomas narrates:

Thalberg was impressed by the success Universal has enjoyed with horror pictures. He told Willis Goldbeck: "I want you to give me something even more horrible than *Frankenstein*." ... After Thalberg read the script, he placed his head in his hands. "I asked for something horrifying," he muttered to Goldbeck, and I got it."²⁵

What was shocking and controversial enough about *Freaks* to set it apart from the productive, box-office inspiring shock and controversy of films like *Frankenstein*? Set in a circus sideshow and directed by Tod Browning, it was similar in theme to Browning's 1920s circus melodramas *The Show* and *The Unknown*, dealing with the scheming trapeze artist Cleopatra's attempt to seduce and poison the midget Hans for his money. However, unlike those films, it eschewed make-up and costume trickery and instead cast real circus sideshow performers with physical disabilities and deformities in many of the key roles, apparently in an attempt to out-do existing entries in the cycle in sensationalism. It is to this, rather than to the mutilation of the heroine in the film's only action sequence, that most negative reviews alluded. The on-screen presence of the conjoined twins, the limbless Prince Randian and the legless Johnny Eck, tested the representational limits of disability in Hollywood cinema in a manner scholars on the subject have more recently assessed as both radical and highly exploitative.²⁶

Although it has been argued otherwise, *Freaks* was undoubtedly part of the horror cycle. It is, however, unique in many ways. *Freaks* is also one of the most widely discussed and analysed films in the 1930s horror cycle, and its critical afterlife has to some extent revised its contemporary reputation and status as a horror film. Released sporadically as an exploitation movie throughout the forties and fifties, it was then reclaimed by the sixties counterculture as a radical and compassionate statement about difference, and even exhibited in New York's Museum of Modern Art in 1967.²⁷ A prominent strand in this revisionist critical heritage questions if it is appropriate at all to categorise *Freaks* as a horror movie, pointing out how anomalous it is to the rest of the cycle. *Freaks*, however, as we have seen above, was categorised as a horror film at every stage of its production and original reception. Commissioned and anticipated as part of the horror

cycle, *Freaks* was categorised by reviews as horror, as we will see, and, as the correspondence I have previously quoted shows, both the SRC and local censor boards saw it in the context of the cycle and worried over its gruesomeness.

At its time of release, though, *Freaks* failed more abjectly, and was more universally rejected and panned, than the rest of the cycle. In fact, it was so widely vilified as to be barely qualify as controversial; it was, rather, notorious. While a few reviewers defended it as “fascinating” and “compelling”, there was a widespread critical consensus that it was both morally unacceptable and aesthetically lacking. Also, unlike other controversial entries in the cycle, the outcry resulted not in sensational box office but in the commercial scuppering of the film. Tod Browning’s project of choice after *Dracula*, *Freaks* was planned by Irving Thalberg as a prestige production for MGM. Yet after previews of the film were held in early January 1932, the film was cut by the studio from just under ninety minutes to just over an hour, a running time which included two new scenes, a prologue and a new epilogue.

The production and censorship history of *Freaks* as we know it is patchily documented: archival information is scant, and the PCA Code file for the film is missing, meaning we know far less than we would about its censorship history. This missing information includes the SRC’s dealings with the film, and whether any of the cuts resulted from their requests, although it is very possible. However, we do know from mention of *Freaks* in other files that the SRC were apprehensive about *Freaks* when it was in production, and that afterwards it became a frequently mentioned point of reference when discussing problematic horror films.

In February, the recut film was premiered at the Fox Criterion in Los Angeles, followed by a troubled, patchy and much-denounced national distribution. *Variety* noted in July 1932 that: “Planned by Metro to be one of the sensation pictures of the season, ‘Freaks’ failed to qualify in the sure-fire category, and has been shown in most parts of the country with astonishingly variable results.”²⁸ In March 1932, under the headline “Believe Metro May Call in ‘Freaks’”, *Variety* reported more extensively on the film’s rumoured withdrawal (it was not in fact withdrawn until after its NYC release, in July) and its troubled distribution history:

'Freaks' is looked on as an atrocity in film form. Released in many of the major stands, so far it has failed to profitably draw. Picture, as its title implies, is played mostly by deformed persons with some of the 'freaks' utilized in revolting ways to carry out the story.

General outburst of adverse criticism is said to have been leveled at the Metro feature wherever it has so far appeared with this criticism, meagre grosses and reports of audience reaction said to be the reasons bringing Metro executives to the point of withdrawing the obnoxious film.²⁹

Examination of the generally very poor local box office receipts for *Freaks* would seem to bear this out. In February, the month it was most widely distributed, local box office reports were almost universally very poor. The film was said to be doing "oke" in Indianapolis, but very badly in Portland and a number of other cities. One report was titled "'Freaks' a Disappointment in L.A.", and a *Variety* reporter in St. Louis commented that: "The big disappointment is "Freaks" at the State. Reviewers panned it unmercifully. In Pittsburgh, the report noted that "'Freaks' will prove one of the biggest disappointments in some time at the Penn."³⁰ The monthly box office reports in March confirm that *Freaks* had done poor box office everywhere, and had even established a new low in Louisville and Providence.³¹ In April, it was said to be "delivering a weak session at the Roosevelt" in Chicago, after substantial troubles with the city's strict local censor board: it "got through with a white permit, admitting children, though several censor scissorings." On finally reaching the Rialto in New York, in July, its receipts were said to be the "poorest house has had in a long time."³² Moreover, *Freaks* never even reached the UK market, being banned altogether by the British Board of Film Classification.³³ *Freaks* failed to do the work of an expensive new entry in a film cycle: it generated neither sufficient revenues, or a seam of follow-ups to be profitably mined, and thus stands instead as an apparent anomaly. As Altman would put it, the many new and anomalous elements of *Freaks* were never "genrified" by repetition into recurring elements of horror cycle films

Most reviews, in common with those of other early horror movies, stress that *Freaks* was "one of the macabre films ever filmed."³⁴ For instance, Louella Parsons in the *Los Angeles Examiner*, claims that:

For pure sensationalism "Freaks" tops any picture yet produced. It's more fantastic and grotesque than any shocker ever written, and it makes Sunday school plays of all the horror dramas yet created.³⁵

However, what separates the press coverage of *Freaks* from that of films like *Frankenstein* is the continual negative emphasis on the film having gone too far. The balance and moderation that the trade press had suggested were so essential for *Dracula* and *Frankenstein's* horror to success had apparently been overturned. The *Atlanta Journal* commented that *Freaks* "transcends the fascinatingly horrible, leaving the spectator appalled."³⁶ The *Kansas City Star* goes into more detail about *Freaks'* unacceptability, and its potential importance as a censorship case:

There is no excuse for this picture. It took a weak mind to produce it and it takes a strong stomach to look at it. The reason it was made was to make money. The reason liquor was made was to make money. The liquor interests allowed certain conditions of their business to become so disgraceful that we got prohibition. In *Freaks* the movies make their great step toward national censorship. If they get it, they will have no one to blame but themselves.³⁷

Elsewhere in the trade press, *Freaks* also stirred up the censorship debate. *Harrison's Reports* used *Freaks* as part of their campaign against block booking. They suggested that exhibitors forced to buy *Freaks* as part of a package book it on a slow night and refuse to show it, on the grounds that they are "unwilling to become an instrument of demoralisation among the people of your community." They also suggested that prominent local community figures – police, clergy of various faiths, and civic officials, be invited to private screenings in order to further work up local controversy and promote the campaign. *Rob Wagner's Script* made the catty suggestion that MGM change its motto, on the strength of *Freaks*, from "Ars Gratia Artis" to "Muck for Money's Sake." Skal and Savada speculate somewhat plausibly that the highly delayed New York run of *Freaks* may have been designed to keep the controversy out of the national press until the film had already finished its run.³⁸ The pro-censorship *Motion Picture Herald* (owned by Martin Quigley, one of the architects of the Production Code) in an early review in January, predicted that *Freaks* could be used as a test case to retard the horror cycle:

The question of the taste which prompted it, and the still more important question of the moral effect it will have on the industry with a large portion of the public – these are quite other matters ... if a feeling of revulsion greets it, the picture may serve another good purpose: a warning to producers against offending the finer sensibilities of a vast number of people, and consequently acting as a dam to stem this rising tide of goose-flesh melodrama.³⁹

Freaks' box office failure, so outstanding in the horror cycle, suggests that these reviews are not entirely erroneous in their talk of public outrage. As I have discussed, films like *Frankenstein*, which were both hugely successful and controversial, appear to have

caused a divided public reaction rather than a universally outraged one. However, the reverse appears to be the case with *Freaks*. It is the clearest evidence available that, as Joy feared, horror's pleasurable *frissons* could tip over into unambiguous recoil, disgust and rejection. This begs the important question: what qualities of *Freaks* set it so apart from the rest of the cycle, and caused such a vociferous reaction? And what can this tell us about how the other films of the cycle circumvented such a market failure?

Many reviews, examining why *Freaks* is both atypical of the cycle and affectively more extreme and less successful, speak of its *unmediated* horror and its reality effect, comparing it implicitly or explicitly with the moderating strategies used by other horror films. *Freaks* uses monstrous make-up only in its last scene, when the transformed Cleopatra is displayed; for most of the film, the only visual 'gruesomeness' on offer is located in its disabled performers (many of whom were sideshow performers in everyday life). *Freaks* strips monstrosity of its metaphorical dimension, its degree of abstraction from social reality, and in the process shows by contrast how carefully horror was mediated by other entries in the cycle. The *Motion Picture Herald* review comments, in this regard, that:

It is very distinctly one of the present line of "shock pictures," to this writer the most shocking of them all to date, because it depends for its interest, its thrills and its drama upon actual physical deformity.

In contrast to pictures like "Frankenstein" and "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde," it deals with and uses the real thing, not playthings. The playgoer who sees Boris Karloff in the role of the monster, or Frederic March as the hideous Mr. Hyde, know full well they are seeing only imaginary figures, created by the actor and the make-up man. Not so with these "freaks." They were deliberately gathered from the four corners of the country and presented for what they are, deformed or deficient beings.⁴⁰

According to this analysis, make-up creates a comfort zone, whereas *Freaks* returns the spectator to social reality. It is not play but a confrontation with "the real thing". Most reviews tend also to emphasise a broader problem, *Freaks*' apparent aesthetic lack of control, the absence in it of the many devices, of which abstraction was only one, which the trade press believed horror films used to moderate and structure themselves.

Variety's review argued that:

As a horror story in the 'Dracula' cycle, it is either too horrible or not horrible enough, according to the viewpoint. It is gruesome and uncanny rather than tense, which is where the yarn went off the track. Factors relied upon for effect fail to register properly.⁴¹

Freaks offers us a horror which is stripped of abstraction and of the structuring context of the horror plot and *mise-en-scène*. Its narrative structure is very atypical of horror, and indeed of 1930s Hollywood cinema in general: the first fifty-five minutes are a slow-moving mixture of comic and voyeuristic domestic scenes interspersed with the development of the avaricious trapeze artist Cleopatra's intrigue with the midget male lead Hans, which eventually leads to her attempt to murder him for his fortune. Only the film's climax, in which Cleopatra is pursued and mutilated by the vengeful carnival performers, contains any moments of shock, violence, or fear.

Freaks also, crucially, did not tend to make use of suggestion and ellipsis in its narrative until the climactic scene of Cleopatra's mutilation, whose fade-out was another product of the studio's recutting after previews. The *Boston Evening Transcript* notes that *Freaks* has a stylistic baldness and crudity that is at odds with Browning's earlier thrillers with Lon Chaney:

This is not the Browning we knew before. There are horrors, to be sure, but where is that sense of artistry that used to be an equal part of his trademark? Only at rare moments are those touches of imagination, those bits of photographic ingenuity that used to make his grotesqueries a source of pleasure. Here the outlines are sharp and hard. The backgrounds are negligible. Of half-suggestions, murky hints of terrors that cannot be plainly spoken, there is nothing. It was those things that once gave him his reputation as a magician of the macabre. Here there is only a catalog of horrors, ticketed and labeled, dragged out into the sunlight before the camera to be photographed against whatever background happens to be handy.⁴²

Freaks' horror is contextualised not within the carefully paced rhythms that *Variety* and others in the trade press had praised in *Dracula* and *Frankenstein*, but in a fragmentary narrative which uncomfortably blends voyeurism and slow-burn suspense with valorisation of the 'freaks' and their community.

Several conclusions about the horror cycle can be drawn from the unusual case of *Freaks*. As a high-profile, expensive and notorious failure, *Freaks* made a very public point about horror and innovation. New horror films faced the danger of going too far, tipping audience and critical reactions from ambivalence and controversy into outright disgust. One could plausibly speculate that *Freaks* is likely to have influenced horror production trends, discouraging experimentation with increased visual extremity. Both the *Freaks* debacle and other more minor local censorship controversies very probably lent more weight to the SRC's suggestions during censorship negotiations that horror

films use strategies of abstraction, context and suggestion. Meanwhile, film producers and studios were likewise directly encouraged by *Freaks* to continue to rely on existing strategies of balance, tension and moderation for eliciting enjoyable *frissons*, and manageable controversy, from spectators.

3.4 The moderating and conserving influence of internal censorship upon the horror cycle, 1932-33

The Studio Relations Committee's internal censorship, was intended to anticipate both the cuts of local censors and broader anti-cinema criticism from independent campaigners. The SRC and, after them, the PCA were, as we have seen, not simply censors who cut. They intended to have a collaborative, editorial role, working with producers to eliminate potentially controversial elements from films and making changes and substitutions as well as deletions. As such, they had an increasing importance in the early 1930s as interpreter of these objections for film producers and studios.

In the case of horror, this had an outcome unintended by the SRC. The SRC's case-by-case dealings with horror films lacked consistency or a unified policy, and failed to deal adequately with horror as a broader censorship issue. They were nevertheless an important influence on the cycle's production trends, interpreting the cycle's many local controversies and censorship problems, and suggesting strategies by which producers should deal with them.

In fact, SRC negotiations tended to confirm and encourage existing strategies of visual elision in cycle films. Their censorship approach, favouring cutting and implication and expressing caution about the explicit, tended to 'prune' the cycle of its more visceral directions, honing a suggestive approach which nevertheless did not necessarily result in lessened critical or consumer perceptions of the film concerned as less effective. As we have seen, the trade press tended to identify the affective power of horror cycle films as depending on the management and orchestration of "emotional horror" within the film, as much as the thing itself. For this reason, the style of self-censorship and regulation recommended by the SRC tended to discourage experimentation but arguably may have

preserved cycle films' affective success with audiences, and continued unpopularity with censorship campaigners.

As I mentioned earlier, in January 1932, as the horror films of 1931 were beginning to burgeon into a cycle, Colonel Joy wrote to Will Hays once more, voicing his concerns:

If something equally as effective could be done about the so-called horror pictures we'd be very much happier than we are. The fact that the supply of such stories is necessarily limited will lead eventually to straining for more and more horror until the wave topples over and breaks. Universal now has two more such stories in mind for production in the next year and a half, and all the others are much intrigued by the fact that FRANKENSTEIN is staying for four weeks and taking in big money at theatres which were just about on the rocks. Talking out here won't have much effect, with the cycle as successful as it is, although our voices haven't been stilled. In fact Fred took up the matter with members of the executive committee on December 28th, but because these pictures were then making a lot of money there wasn't much inclination on the part of the committee to pay attention to the warnings. If the scattered and more or less individual instances that come to our attention reflect the general attitude, resentment is surely being built up. How could it be otherwise if children go to these pictures and have the jitters, followed by nightmares? I, for one, would hate to have my children see FRANKENSTEIN, JEKYLL or the others and you probably feel the same way about Bill. Not only is there a future economic consideration, but maybe there is a real moral responsibility involved to which I wonder if we as individuals ought to lend our support. It occurs to me that you might want to call the attention of the company heads to the situation and see how they feel about it. The latest picture of the type is MURDERS IN THE RUE MORGUE. It lacks the punch of Frankenstein, but the idea of the ape pursuing the girl is sufficiently disturbing.⁴³

This letter flags up many of the major problems that the SRC and PCA would encounter when trying to deal with the cycle and its conflicts with local censorship and national controversy. Joy's most important observation is one which as we have seen in the last chapter, arises obviously from horror's terminological origin and the formative days of the cycle: that the horror cycle's box office success could not be separated from its controversy. In fact, the centrality of horror itself to the cycle's success suggested to them that the problem was likely to exacerbate itself as producers "[strain] for more and more horror until the wave topples over and breaks", a phrase which hints that Joy feared a major censorship crisis case. Individual instances of local censorship and controversy might gradually build into a higher pitch of public resentment. Such an apparently divided public might keep the horror cycle in lively enough short-term profit for it to inflict longer-term economic damage to the film industry through the controversy it caused.

This future narrative projected by Joy for the cycle was quite accurate in parts. The box office successes of the cycle were indivisible from local censorship trouble, and it did indeed become one of the more important categories of 'problem film' for censorship campaigners. However, as I discussed in reference to *Freaks*, despite the signs in 1932 that new horror films were pushing the envelope and becoming increasingly extreme, Joy's major prediction did not transpire. The horror cycle emphatically did not increase in extremity of "gruesomeness" until it reached a crisis point of scandal and notoriety. Neither, on the other hand, did the SRC manage to shut the cycle down entirely, or to neuter its controversial appeal. In fact, SRC policy on horror, along with external censorship and controversy, helped the cycle to steer a middle course, conserving both its basic appeal and its continued censorship troubles, but discouraging wider experimentation with increased extremity.

The SRC's negotiations with horror producers from 1932 to 1934, despite the apparent strength of feeling in Joy's letter to Hays, also show a somewhat inconsistent case-by-case approach towards horror, and where its problematic qualities lay. They were frequently worryingly inaccurate in their predictions about the scale of local censorship problems. While some films were issued with dire warnings and requests for cuts, others were approved almost without reservation and went on to have substantial local difficulties. Moreover, when requested cuts were made, they did not always effectively dissuade further cutting and banning from regional censor boards.

These difficulties in censoring horror persisted in spite of full co-operation from most horror producers. Up to 1934, the SRC saw at least one draft script and a preview screening of every horror film for which SRC documentation remains, barring the independent *White Zombie*. I would argue that in fact, such difficulties stemmed from the SRC's failure to develop a consistent model of horror censorship, one consistent with Code-based censorship policy and effective in its anticipation of local censorship issues. The SRC was almost undoubtedly familiar with anti-horror arguments from independent campaigners and anti-horror critics. However, if those arguments could not be reconciled with the reasoning of the Production Code, then the horror cycle remained for the SRC a marginal and problematic part of their work.

Murders in the Rue Morgue went through substantial local censorship difficulties, especially in respect of one notorious scene. The SRC's attempts to tone down this

scene, and the film, proved inadequate to protect against objections from local censorship boards. October 1931, the SRC advised Carl Laemmle Jr. that the *Murders in the Rue Morgue* was “reasonably safe from censorship difficulties, provided the picture is not regarded as too gruesome or too full of horrors ... But we feel sure that you, in your usual splendid manner, will make certain this is not the case.” Laemmle confidently replied that the film’s plot had been handled “so as not to be too gruesome or too sex suggestive.” Joy suggested that one particular “gruesome” scene, in which Bela Lugosi’s Dr. Mirakle tortures a prostitute by injecting her with ape’s blood, have its soundtrack toned down.

However, the SRC appears to have completely failed to anticipate the degree of censorship notoriety, rivalling *Frankenstein*, that this scene would gain *Murders in the Rue Morgue*. Pennsylvania, Virginia, New York, Kansas, Massachusetts and Chicago all cut the torture scene to a brief flash, along with various other cuts for gruesome content which varied from state to state. The Seattle Board of Film Trade, normally a totally inactive censor board, rose from its slumber to cut 247 feet from *Murders*. In Canada, the film fared even worse. Ontario cut the film substantially, while Alberta at first rejected the film entirely “on account of the murder and horror scenes which are objectionable to so many”. After the intercession of the MPPDA, the film was passed, but with cuts even more drastic than those of Ontario. The MPPDA was also forced to intervene in British Columbia and in Vancouver after their boards, too, rejected the film. British Columbia described the film as “macabre in the extreme”.⁴⁴

Universal’s promotional material, on the other hand, shows that the studio were well aware of exactly where the film’s “macabre” elements lay, and were far from keen to minimize them. The marketing for *Murders on the Rue Morgue* is typical of the cycle in its promises of extremes of pleasurable terror and taboo subject matter. The plot is recounted in a promotional list of the film’s “HIGH-SPOTS” covering moments of horror, suspense, and romance, which constantly attempts to sell the film on the strength of its horror elements. Emphasising Bela Lugosi’s presence as an established horror star, the material claims that *Murders* “even outstrips [*Dracula*] in its thrills and breathless interest.” The troublesome torture scene and “the inhuman practices of Dr. Mirakle” are made much of, and incidentally the prostitute he kills is referred to plainly, as a “prostitute”, throughout the promotional material. Notes on the initial meeting of Camille and the ape, and her later kidnap, stress that the latter is “full of desire for Camille”. The

first scene in the kidnap sequence is “literally hair-raising”, and “blood-curdling shrieks ... confirm the fears of the audience, and the scene raises excitement to a high pitch.” The cheerful promotion of the extremity of the thrills on offer and of the bestiality angle shows Universal at odds with the SRC in intent: marketing horror, based on its previous reception and successful marketing, for sensation and extremity.⁴⁵

Victor Halperin's independently-made Bela Lugosi vehicle *White Zombie* was another case in which the SRC failed to anticipate substantial local censorship difficulties. On 28th July 1932, an SRC synopsis noted of this film: “Seemingly contains nothing outstandingly questionable from the domestic standpoint. Because of its gruesomeness, recommended for an adult audience.” There were no requests for cuts at all from the SRC. On release, though, numerous major censor boards – Ohio, Massachusetts, British Columbia and Chicago - made cuts for gruesomeness.⁴⁶ Among the most frequently cut sequences were a zombie falling into a treadmill, and a shot of the heroine lying in a coffin. The SRC also later had to intercede on Halperin's behalf when the “new and very severe” Pasadena Board of Censors banned *White Zombie* “on general grounds that theme of this nature should not be presented on screen”.

Doctor X had relatively few local censorship difficulties. A letter from Lamar Trotti of the SRC to Jack Warner concerning the film notes the recent “tendency on the part of censors to do some cutting in pictures of this type where there is an element of the gruesome”.⁴⁷ However, the film encountered little domestic censorship trouble, although Ontario cut much of the violence in the final scene and close-ups of the killer's “synthetic flesh” hand and face, and Great Britain made cuts for dialogue, after Joy argued the British censors out of cutting the essential scene where the killer reveals himself by putting on the synthetic flesh.⁴⁸

The SRC's approach in the case of *The Invisible Man* in late 1932, however, was particularly bullish, rather more so than with other horror films in production at the same time, even those which later encountered local censorship difficulty. Lamar Trotti of the SRC advised Laemmle of a rough draft of *The Invisible Man* that three “factors” might cause difficulty. Two of these factors cover anxieties over reference to contemporary politics: the suggestion that the President and Cabinet are helpless before the Invisible Man “even so impossible a story as this one”, “calls for serious thought”; and worry is voiced over giving the Invisible Man identifiable victims such as Henry Ford, John D.

Greer, and J. P. Mortimer. The third “factor” is the use of a roomful of rats, questionable “in view of the natural revulsion that most people – particularly women, have to rodents. Add to the sight of the rats, the impression that they are carrying the germs of bubonic plague, and the result is rather terrifying. The use of guinea pigs might be possible, but even then questionable in connection with the plague unless extremely well handled. Perhaps it might be possible to indicate that the animals are already invisible, as Carpenter [as the Invisible Man is named in this draft] had planned to send them out.” Trotti is comprehensive in his list of concerns. He flags the transformation scene: “In showing a close-up of Carpenter in his transformation you will of course want to avoid gruesomeness.” However he continues: “Further objections are to rats, snakes drinking, the word “B’jeez”, reference to assassinating the president and taking over the country, and the word “jeez”.⁴⁹ Wingate twice advised Universal, regarding the scripts, to “handle the various murders in such a way as to keep them from being either so brutal or so gruesome as to cause them to be eliminated.”⁵⁰ In fact, with its initial plot abandoned for a new script much closer to Wells’ novella, *The Invisible Man* was left almost entirely intact by the major domestic and international boards: a cut of the line “God knows” in Massachusetts was its only loss.⁵¹ It seems therefore to be a case where the SRC’s policy of moderating horror brought them a short term success.

During the same period, though, *The Mask of Fu Manchu* was being dealt with in almost the opposite manner by the SRC, with a gentler approach which failed to anticipate later cutting from the censor boards for gruesomeness and sadism. In October 1932 James Wingate advised Irving Thalberg to make a few cuts, in particular protection shots of all scenes involving snakes. He commented to William Orr of MGM “we are not sure but what you may have slight difficulty with some of the horror elements, and have so written the studio. This, however, will be purely a local censorship problem ...”⁵² Indeed, it turned out to be a substantial local censorship problem: *The Mask of Fu Manchu* received extensive attention from the major state censor boards, and all of them barring Kansas cut the film severely. Among the many and various deletions were sadistic dialogue, shots of snakes and insects, and various scenes of torture and other gruesome moments. Quebec rejected the film entirely, citing “Cruelty – opium – etc.”, and only approved it after it had been extensively recut.⁵³

An external previewer reporting to the SRC, Maude Latham, had offered a much more negative, and accurate, assessment of *The Mask of Fu Manchu*’s prospects for local

censorship, commenting that "... we greatly fear it will receive a similar reception to "Freaks" in some communities."⁵⁴ However, in this case as in others in the horror cycle, the SRC tended to partially anticipate local censorship difficulties but to pull back from actually intervening to prevent them. When previewers or even SRC personnel (usually accurately) predicted local censorship trouble, the committee often held back from requesting cuts.

Mystery of the Wax Museum and *Murders in the Zoo*, produced at the same time, were treated in a very different manner by the SRC, much along the lines of the similarly wildly inconsistent treatment they had given *Fu Manchu* and *The Invisible Man*. *Mystery of the Wax Museum* was another case where the SRC's confidence in a film's local censorship fortunes proved to be misplaced. After having viewed *Murders in the Zoo*, Wingate commented to Paramount that "though it contained three murders, in addition to certain other gruesome elements, we believe the picture has been handled in such good taste as to cause little or no apprehension in the matter of official censorship." Despite this, nearly all the major regional censor boards made cuts for gruesomeness, and in particular a sequence culminating in a close-up shot of a man who has had his mouth forcibly stitched up, in a relatively realistic make-up which includes blood and swollen, discoloured skin. This was cut by six censor boards, while eleven censor boards cut part or all of a scene in which Lionel Atwill as the villain throws his wife into an alligator pond. Different boards made various other cuts besides these, and Quebec banned the film altogether initially, although it subsequently accepted a cut version.⁵⁵

Mystery of the Wax Museum's case helps to illuminate this inconsistent policy somewhat: it confirms that the horror cycle was still considered only partially censorable by the SRC. This film encountered relatively minor trouble, for a horror film, with local censors: New York, Ohio, Quebec and British Columbia all made small cuts for a racy line, a close shot of the lighting of the museum fire with paper, and mentions of drugs. Quebec made two brief cuts for violence. Only Alberta and Great Britain made cuts for gruesomeness, most notably for Igor's make-up, which, although it was only mentioned by these two censor boards, the British censors felt was "nauseating and by far the worst of its type they have yet had presented to them."⁵⁶ The film had been approved unreservedly by the SRC, with no requests for cuts or warnings to the producers, yet a synopsis of the previewed film, for the committee's own reference, notes with great concern that:

This is a new type of horror film, with the creeps. It contains many gruesome scenes ... Adults will find plenty of thrills and much excitement, but it is too strong for others than adult audiences. I am of the opinion that some censorable criticism will be had because of the gruesome sequences and the staring [*sic*] of the destructive fire, causing a human being to burn. The stealing of the bodies from the morgue may also cause trouble because of the statutes forbidding the mutilation of bodies after death.⁵⁷

This memo is specific and detailed in its explanations of which elements of the film might be censored locally, and for what reason. Why, then, were these criticisms not mentioned to the film's producers when the film was declared free from local censorship problems? Moreover, if, as it seems from Joy's correspondence with Hays, the SRC was aware of the horror cycle as a censorship issue at such an early stage, then why were its dealings with horror films so littered with inconsistencies and failures to adequately predict the actions of local boards? Several pieces of correspondence from during *The Mask of Fu Manchu*'s production shed some light on SRC censorship policies towards horror. Notably, after seeing a preview, Wingate advised William Orr of MGM that:

In fact, we are not sure but what you may have slight difficulty with some of the horror elements, and have so written the studio. This, however, will purely be a local censorship problem; and we are advising the studio to the best of our ability as to the points where they had better supply you with protection shots, in case of need.⁵⁸

Wingate's report to Hays notes with no more concern that the film is "a little long on horror elements. This is purely a censorship matter and we have written Mr. Thalberg in detail, pointing out the danger spots where we think he had better protect himself."⁵⁹ "Censorship matter" here refers to local censorship; as we have seen, horror was not mentioned in the original Production Code. However, the Production Code was designed to govern an evolving practice, rather than as a lengthy gloss for a fixed set of "censorship issues". Joy's correspondence with Hays over the horror cycle indicates, however, that he aspired to a broader outlook and more proactive stance for the SRC, as he discusses weeding out problematic cycles and, in the manner the Production Code suggests, trying to actively mould the industry into something that would be viewed more positively by pro-censorship campaigning bodies and individuals.

The SRC's attempts to influence horror cycle films tended towards moderating and tempering their visual extremes, but leaving the basic source of their controversy untouched. In fact, it tended to guide them towards innuendo, and to encourage a degree of consistency to their modes of visually representing the "gruesome". Ruth

Vasey has convincingly argued that this was a strategy the SRC, particularly under Joy's guidance, applied across the board. She argues that the SRC often dealt with controversial subject matter and content by negotiating for stylistic shifts in the manner the material was presented, towards "delicacy", ellipsis and implication. Vasey claims this notion was developed with reference to sexual content, but applied to "a range of other sensitive subjects, from crime and "gruesomeness" to national and ethnic characterisation."⁶⁰

One could argue, therefore, that the SRC's policies towards horror and towards the Production Code helped to conserve the cycle's controversy - and also to conserve the cycle itself, and even to shape it to some degree. While controversy and cuts could reduce a film's box office performance, and studios would rather films went out uncut, the latter were not willing to strip horror of its edge as long as the cycle remained in healthy profit, and as long as major controversies did not force action.

The SRC's stance towards horror treated it as a local censorship matter and therefore only partially under their remit. The advice they gave to studios followed the practices of local censors, focusing on individually problematic scenes, rather than on the broader affect and effects on which national censorship activism focuses, as articulated for instance in James Forman's *Our Movie Made Children*, which I discuss in detail in Chapter Four. At stake was an understanding of *where* horror's controversial qualities really lay. Censor boards' reliance on cutting can be seen as basically pragmatic, the easiest way available to them of controlling film content. The SRC's understanding of "gruesomeness", following such practises, tended to treat it as a series of identifiable visual and aural instances. They treated horror by encouraging producers to curtail and obfuscate its most extreme visual and aural manifestations, and, unlike independent censorship campaigners, tended to underplay the affective, or to assume it could be dealt with by means of these instances.

The SRC's correspondence with Universal concerning the infamous torture scene in *Murders in the Rue Morgue* is a fine example of how SRC policy tended to guide horror films towards visual elision, implication and innuendo. Colonel Joy, advising Laemmle after a preview of the film, pronounces it satisfactory from a Code perspective apart from a close-up shot of the navels of some dancers. He goes on to note, though, that the torture scene could cause problems with local censors. "Because the victim is a woman,

which has not heretofore been the case in other so-called “horror” pictures recently produced, censor boards are very likely to think that this scene is over done in gruesomeness.” Joy’s suggestion for circumventing potential difficulties is, as I mentioned, that a new soundtrack for the scene be made, “reducing the constant loud shrieking to lower moans and an occasional modified shriek.” Although Laemmle followed this advice and redubbed the soundtrack, yet the scene was still cut in its entirety by nearly every local censor board.⁶¹

Similarly, Colonel Joy advised Darryl Zanuck of Warner Bros. to prevent possible local censorship by careful attention to two individual scenes. He declares that the script for *Doctor X* is satisfactory:

... provided the gruesome aspects are not too realistically developed. It is particularly important to handle carefully the scene in which Wells reveals himself as a monster with his human mask and his human arm. There is also a possibility of there being too much horror in the scene in which the monster’s clothes are ignited by the lamp which Lee throws at him. ...You know the situation in regards to the horror films and I feel confident that you will protect yourself in those scenes which lend themselves to gruesomeness.”⁶²

Although this approach attempted to anticipate the actions of local censors, as we have seen, they tended to still cut scenes which had already been toned down. The SRC’s policy of implication, for horror at least, failed to deal adequately with the reasoning which underlay the actions of local boards. Correspondence between local censors and the SRC seems to suggest that the former, like the trade press and the independent censorship campaign, often understood horror as basically affective rather than located solely in visual and aural instances of “gruesomeness”.

The most relevant question, then, both for censorship and the cycle itself, is what effect the curtailment of visual and aural gruesomeness had on the affect of a horror film. As the cycle’s continued controversy and local censorship suggests, localised cutting did not always decrease that affective power in a simple or reliable way. For instance, the mutilations which take place in the “house of pain” in *Island of Lost Souls* are never depicted directly, but instead implied by off-screen screams and shots of the operating table directly before or after the experiment itself.

The 1930s horror cycle made use of similar strategies of ellipsis from its beginnings, in order to *elicit* the same affective response that the SRC hoped such ellipsis would

soften. *Dracula* makes broad use of such techniques of suggestion. It uses fade-outs to end scenes of horror prematurely: for instance, before Dracula bites Renfield and later the flower-girl, and later as Renfield crawls towards an unconscious parlour-maid. The parlour-maid instance is particularly notorious as no follow-up scene ever establishes what happens to her after the fade-out. Elsewhere, the film uses shadows and silhouettes with a voice-over to portray the discovery of the corpse-littered ship *Vesta*; and Dracula's death itself is conveyed via an off-screen scream. Similarly, the scene in *Frankenstein* in which the Monster menaced Elizabeth cuts to her scream, heard by Henry from elsewhere in the house, and rediscovers her fainted on the bed. The elision both produces suspense and implies a possible assault which would not be so strongly suggested had we *seen* Elizabeth faint. The suggestions of the SRC with regard to later horror cycle films, and to some extent the deletions of local censorship, encouraged this existing direction and discouraged other, more direct visual approaches to moments of horror. The curtailing of horror's visual extremes could not only preserve but even perhaps intensify its affective power.

The SRC also encouraged the use of fantastic and exotic settings as moderating framing devices, intended to stress the horror film's fictionality and therefore excuse its "gruesomeness" and lessen its affective power. John Wilson of the SRC commented to a Canadian censor concerning *Murders in the Rue Morgue*:

I am glad your board saw fit to pass MURDERS IN THE RUE MORGUE. It seemed to me so imaginative and fantastic, and I felt that no one could be seriously affected by the incidental idea of the doctor's experiments.⁶³

While appeals to framing provided the SRC with an easy way to address in part the question of affect, the censorship fate of *Murders* shows that this strategy was not always wholly effective. In a similar vein, the SRC pushed to rewrite the script of *The Invisible Man*, which in its first draft was set in present-day America and involved an attempted coup against the President. After the script was entirely rewritten to take place in a Wellsian English village with the temporally vague quaintness of 'Universal Europe,' Wingate sent Hays a satisfied report on the new draft commenting that the script "is written in a highly fantastic and exotic vein, and presents no particular censorship difficulties."⁶⁴ A letter from Wingate to Sydney Singerman of Universal's New York office sheds even more light on the SRC's censorship reasons for finding the change of setting more acceptable: "Though certain scenes verge on the gruesome, we believe that on the

whole the picture has been handled in such a way as to avoid any serious danger of censorship difficulty. *If the picture can be presented to the censor boards and public generally as a fantasy, not to be taken too realistically, we believe it will be helpful.*"⁶⁵

Correspondingly, some censor boards believed that realistic settings could exacerbate the affective power of horror. A letter from Irwin Esmond, the director of the New York Censor Board, to Wingate (which Wingate forwarded to the studio) states in reference to *The Mask of Fu Manchu*:

However, the producers have done everything in the world to give an air of reality to the audience. People tortured are present day people starting out from the British Museum ... it is not until you stop to think that you realise that the story must necessarily be more or less of a fairy tale. The trouble with this type of picture is that there are so many people in the audience that get the full effect of the horrors without realising the fantastical part of the tale.

Long before I took this job, I had a number of parents complain that the younger members of the family were scared most to death by pictures of this type. I do not mean little children, but those nearer adult age.⁶⁶

A prominently exotic setting, Wingate implies, might go some way to making "the fantastical part of the tale" more obvious and therefore less disturbing, especially for supposedly vulnerable spectators like children and adolescents.

The SRC's advice to producers concerning local censorship encouraged them to protect themselves by pre-cutting problematic scenes – not just by cutting filmed material but by techniques of obfuscation, innuendo and ellipsis which moderated and managed horror, such as off-screen sounds and screams, action represented by shadows and silhouettes, premature fade-outs which hint at action by eliding it, and fantastic or abstracted settings. Such techniques did prevent the cycle from tipping over into horror too explicit or unmoderated to survive local censorship, or even into the unmediated extremity of a film like *Freaks*. Policies of obfuscation in fact helped to conserve the horror cycle, maintaining and even promoting the carefully-managed "emotional horror" which was the source of its controversy as well as its appeal, while minimally appeasing censors.

The reasons for this lie in the gap between the way the SRC and independent pro-censorship bodies like local boards constructed horror as a censorship problem. The SRC's methods of dealing with horror were not only quantitatively but *qualitatively* inadequate. Their moderation of horror in fact chimed with the strategies of studios

themselves. The result was that the horror cycle continued thrive, to feed into the wider cinema censorship debate and to be subject to anti-horror criticism as a result. As controversy became more and more a key determining issue, the cycle's future would rest on the SRC's ability to negotiate this gap and produce a more fully developed discourse of horror as a censorship issue which could incorporate and thereby anticipate the objections of local boards and independent campaigners. I will explore this issue fully in my next chapter.

Chapter Four: “Emotional possession”: how did the Production Code Administration develop an effective censorship model of horror?

In this chapter I explore the development of the discourse of horror censorship during the latter half of the cycle, from 1933 to 1936. During this period, the attitude of the Production Code Administration (as the Studio Relations Committee was renamed) towards horror films evolved from inconsistent and patchily successful attempts to moderate instances of “gruesomeness” to a much comprehensive and drastic policy of horror censorship.

I argue that the most important change was not a result of the increased staff and therefore more comprehensive attention to detail of Joseph Breen’s renamed PCA. It resulted from a fundamental change in the way the PCA understood horror to operate, the end of censoring horror as if it were a kind of violence, and the beginnings of censoring it as a kind of affect. I suggest that this change in thinking can be attributed partly to the PCA’s experiences with negotiations of two films during 1934, *The Black Cat* and *Bride of Frankenstein*, but also arguably was enabled by the emergence elsewhere in contemporary film censorship discourse of a Code-compatible social effects narrative which explained why and how horror was bad – a negative theory of horror and how it worked as fully realised as the positive theory of horror which emerged in the trade press and studio marketing.

This new censorship model of horror was provided by the Payne Fund Studies, a series of psychological studies of the effects of cinema on young people which was funded by a censorship campaigning group. The great publicity the studies received in the popular media, especially in the form of a bestselling popular digest, *Our Movie Made Children*, publicised a new censorship model of horror which integrated it with the social effects reasoning on which most modern censorship discourse – including that of the Production Code – was based.

By providing and widely disseminating an explanation of horror as a censorship problem which encompassed the objections of various groups, *Our Movie Made Children* gave the PCA the theoretical tools for a much more ambitious and pro-active horror

censorship policy. Their negotiations with producers from 1935-1936 display a much more directly confrontational stance upon horror, and actively worked to dissuade studios from making horror films, an aim they achieved by summer 1936. In fact, I contend that the most important factor in the end of the 1930s horror cycle was the PCA's direct pressure on studios not to produce horror films. In doing so, I argue that available scholarly explanations of the end of the 1930s horror cycle under-represent the PCA's direct pressure upon producers, and over-represent the pressure of external censorship, particularly from British censors.

The end of the 1930s horror cycle therefore constituted not the exhaustion of a trend but a problem posed for a financially successful genre category of film. Or rather, horror's perennial problem as a genre category, controversy and anti-horror campaigning, had emerged in a critical new form.

4.1 The case of *The Black Cat*: "gruesomeness" as an inadequate censorship model of horror

The case of *The Black Cat* falls at a pivotal point in the history of the Production Code's administration. In retrospect, it indicates that the SRC/PCA's problems in censoring horror were qualitative as well as quantitative, and therefore the thorough and consistent attention enabled by their personnel expansion would not be enough alone.

"Gruesomeness" itself, their model for horror censorship, was inadequate for anticipating objections. Its specific censorship problems also seem to have indicated some of this to the PCA at the time. As I will show in later sections of this chapter, their repeated allusion to *The Black Cat*'s difficulties in later horror censorship cases in 1935-1936 seem to indicate that this film marked the beginning of their reconsideration of horror and substantial change in their approach to its censorship.

While the SRC's recommended policies of moderation and obfuscation in horror films apparently helped extend the cycle, their correspondence indicates that Colonel Joy and Will Hays had aspirations to a more proactive, long-term strategy involving actively discouraging problematic cycles. As an advisory body and as a diplomatic go-between, the SRC was forced by turns to criticise problematic films and cycles to the studios which

produced them and to defend the same films and cycles to local censors. After the Reaffirmation in 1933, the SRC made a definite general move towards making requests instead of giving advice.

Joseph Breen's new Production Code Administration refined the SRC's approach. Thanks to their expanded staff, the reworked organisation was able to enforce the Code more comprehensively, reviewing at every stage from treatment to finished movie, and therefore at every level from plot and theme to individual shots. However, Lea Jacobs has pointed out, quite correctly, that Breen's depiction of himself as a "thundering autocrat" belies the degree to which Code censorship under his auspices remained fundamentally a process of negotiation with filmmakers, not a series of diktats.¹ Similarly, Richard Maltby has argued that in negotiations over particularly problematic films, Breen used direct and harsh opening stances as a rhetorical strategy which compensated for the fact that the PCA were not actually empowered to disapprove scripts; they could refuse a certificate only after viewing a finished film.²

The PCA's initial approach to the horror cycle involved following the SRC's policy of encouraging obfuscation. The main sign of the change of regime in the PCA's dealings with Universal in their first horror case, *The Black Cat*, is a greatly increased attentiveness bearing witnessed to the PCA's greater staff resources and closer monitoring. The local censorship results of the PCA's advice to *The Black Cat*'s producers seems to have prompted the first stage of a rapidly evolving new PCA policy on the horror cycle, which within a year moved from a basic practice similar to that it had implemented as the SRC, to a determined policy of discouraging horror as such and therefore the cycle itself. The SRC had not been able to wield enough power for the more comprehensive and active censorship that a more ambitious and nuanced reading of the workings of horror would imply. The PCA's development of a more comprehensive policy on the horror cycle involved overhauling and complicating their beliefs about where, precisely in the body of a film its censorable qualities, and affective power, lay.

The censorship history of *The Black Cat* represents is notable for two reasons. Firstly, it strongly suggests that the PCA's primary problem in dealing with horror was a failure of analysis, rather than of thoroughness. Secondly, it marks a turning point in their relationship with the horror cycle. After *The Black Cat*, as we shall see, the PCA's dealings with horror began a sharp learning curve.

In the pre-production phase of *The Black Cat*, Joseph Breen met with the director in conference and asked for an extensive list of changes to the script. Breen adopted a noticeably more bullish attitude towards defining censorable elements than his predecessors. While he noted that the script "suggests no difficulty, from the stand point of our Production Code", a number of things "ought to be carefully handled, to avoid mutilation of your picture by the censor boards." Twenty separate deletions ordered include reference to homosexuality, a derogatory joke about Czechoslovakians, a scene of a girl being followed walking out of a lavatory, innuendo, an inverted cross and suggestions of a Black Mass, and shots of Boris Karloff's character Poelzig in bed with a naked woman. This comprehensive sweep of all possible objectionable elements also covers various concerns about cutting gruesome elements. These include a shot of a cat licking blood from the heroine's shoulder, the killing of the cat, shots of a girl's corpse in a glass coffin, and another appearance of a corpse. The most substantial objection was to the climactic scene in which Lugosi's character eviscerates Karloff's. The PCA drew particular attention to this scene in the main body of the letter, before mentioning it again in the list of problematic scenes. Their solution to this potential local censorship problem was to negotiate with Universal over the manner in which this scene was shot, in order to moderate the "dangerous" excess they saw in it, and "bring [it] into conformance with the Code":

The major difficulty on this score is indicated by the gruesomeness, which is suggested by the script, dealing with the scenes of the action of skinning a man alive. It is our understanding that you propose to suggest this purely by silhouette, but as we suggested this morning, this particular phase of your production will have to be handled with great care, lest it become too gruesome or revolting.³

The PCA was very keen to make sure that Universal complied with their stipulations in the manner this scene was filmed. A new script was sent on February 28, along with a letter stating that a sequence had been eliminated, and "various other changes" made, although, carefully, it does not mention whether they are the specific changes requested. An anxious internal memo to Breen from the same day notes "no appreciable change" in the script, and that "the skinning alive scenes ... remain unchanged."⁴ However, the PCA's vigilance appeared to pay off.

The finished film, as recommended, depicted the evisceration scene only as a shadow-play on a wall, accompanied by a gloating voiceover from Lugosi and a few sound

effects, groans from Karloff and a close-up of his hand twisting. The PCA pronounced themselves very satisfied. Breen wrote, after having seen a rough cut of the film, that it conformed to the Code and contained "little, if anything, that is reasonably censorable", but also added that "We are particularly pleased with the manner in which your studio and director have handled this subject, and we congratulate you."⁵ Despite the comprehensiveness and attentiveness of their monitoring of scripts, the PCA were relying on the same basic strategies of elision that had informed Joy's approach to horror, and which I discussed in Chapter Three.

However, *The Black Cat*'s experiences with local censors on release starkly contradicted their judgement. The film's substantial difficulties with local censor boards were centred almost exclusively around the shadow-play evisceration scene. Five different boards cut the scene in its entirety, including the dialogue between Karloff and Lugosi which leads into it: Maryland, Ohio, Chicago, Ontario, and Quebec.⁶ All these boards apart from Ontario left the rest of the film untouched.

Instances of the SRC and PCA's application of the term "gruesome" back this up: as we have seen, it was used of operation scenes, transformation sequences, shots of corpses, torture scenes like those in *Murders in the Rue Morgue* and *The Black Cat*, monster make-up, operation scenes, and the "burning wax figures and lighting effects of the morgue" of *Mystery of the Wax Museum*.⁷

As I mentioned in Chapter One, Stephen Prince, in his recent study *Classical Film Violence*, has argued that gruesomeness was a kind of violence, and that "violence is the great ghost in the genre [of 1930s horror], lurking behind its controversies."⁸ Prince's argument is that gruesomeness affects because it shows "implicitly referenced violence." In his example, the grave-robbing scenes are gruesome, and censorable, because of the never-seen assault on the dead they imply, and the Monster's stitched body is so because his "elaborate scarring visualized the results of Frankenstein's assaults on the bodies of the dead."⁹

While such an analysis of gruesomeness is both valid and undoubtedly close to the SRC's own understanding of the matter, it ignores some crucial aspects of horror's censorable workings. First, the violations of the body which constituted gruesome instances did not always imply violence *per se* – as can be seen from the lack of

distinction between congenital deformities and mutilation expressed by the controversy surrounding the cast of *Freaks*.

Horror marketing and trade press criticism, as I discussed in Chapter Two, both focused more on horror's emotional effects than on its gruesome sights and sounds. More importantly, the SRC's treatment of horror merely as a series of visual and aural instances of "gruesomeness", which could be censored like violence or nudity, was contested by *other censorship bodies*. As I will argue later in this chapter, the adequacy of "gruesomeness" as a basis for a comprehensive SRC and PCA horror censorship policy was challenged by instances like the local censorship of a scene in *The Black Cat* for implicit horror and – more prominently – by the narrative of horror films' problematic psychological effects in media discussion of the Payne Fund Studies. The key problem in the PCA's development of a more comprehensive and assured horror censorship policy was the bridging of the gap between their current working model of gruesomeness, developed during the last four years, and the discourse of "emotional horror" more central to the concerns of both industrial sources and the broader censorship campaign.

It appears that *The Black Cat* prompted the beginning of a more comprehensive transformation of the PCA's policy on horror, a transformation based upon developments in their discourse regarding horror as a censorship problem. That the PCA drew an immediate lesson from this is clear from the fact that they immediately after began to warn horror producers about the dangers of "screen-size shadows of horrors and their undue repetition."¹⁰ Up until this point in the cycle, internal censorship negotiations had tended to underestimate local censor boards' reactions, and thus fail to pre-empt them. After *The Black Cat*, the PCA quickly began to take a stronger position on horror, requesting more numerous and substantial changes before, during and after production. What strategies and theories, then, underpinned this move towards more successful internal censorship?

4.2 Gruesomeness, innuendo and affect: *Bride of Frankenstein* as a transitional case for PCA horror policy

The case of the next horror film the PCA dealt with, *Bride of Frankenstein*, provides an instructive point of comparison with *The Black Cat*. *Bride of Frankenstein* was a high-budget, high-profile sequel to *Frankenstein* whose censorship negotiations were particularly fraught and difficult to resolve. During the extended and negotiations which took place during *Bride's* lengthy planning and production period, we can observe crucial changes taking place in the PCA's horror censorship policy. In particular, during the negotiations over *Bride*, the PCA can be seen moving from a quantitative approach to horror which aimed to moderate visual and aural instances of gruesomeness to a more qualitative approach which was much more critical of innuendo and suggestion.

The Black Cat was granted a Code certificate on April 2, 1934. At that time the PCA had begun to examine draft scripts for *The Return of Frankenstein*, a high-budget Universal sequel to the original film, which would be released a year later, by that time renamed *Bride of Frankenstein*. This film would provide the PCA with their first testing ground for their new, tougher and more comprehensive approach to censoring horror. The long and awkward PCA negotiations over *Bride of Frankenstein* hinged on innuendo and suggestion in the script as much as they did on visual gruesomeness. PCA negotiations of new horror films begun during *Bride's* lengthy pre-production and production period show the marks of their frustration and keenness to establish a more workable censorship method. The strategies applied to *Bride* are applied to them with a stronger hand and a tougher opening position.

The Return of Frankenstein had been in development for a year already when the PCA was formed. Back in July 1933, the SRC under James Wingate had advised Universal on a script draft, cautioning them against "danger of gruesomeness which might cause difficulty" and suggesting some minor dialogue changes and other alterations. A year later, Universal sent the PCA another draft script, and received a noticeably expanded and amplified set of objections and suggestions, showing signs of the PCA's increased activity and closer attention. This reply contained detailed advice on how future drafts should avoid any hint of blasphemy or sexual suggestion, and also contained a standard warning that gruesome scenes should be shot carefully "to avoid offence."¹¹

In December, however, the PCA's response to a further script draft prompted the beginning of a process of wrangling and fractious negotiation which would extend throughout the film's production and release period. This response, while reporting that the script "basically ... seems to meet the requirements of the Production Code", lists three pages of requested changes. It concentrates its attentions on the two censorship issues which had dogged the first *Frankenstein's* release: blasphemy and gruesomeness. The most immediate sign of the PCA's experiences with *The Black Cat's* local censorship in October would seem to be a sweep of the script even more comprehensive than that the recommended eliminations for the latter film, intended to catch as many instances of 'gruesomeness', major and minor, as possible.

One of the principal elements which we believe needs further attention is the number of killings which this present script indicates. We counted ten separate scenes in which the monster either strangles or tramples people to death -- this, in addition to some other murders by subsidiary characters. In a picture as basically gruesome as this one we believe that such a great amount of slaughter is unwise, and we recommend very earnestly that you do something about toning this down. In this connection care will also need to be taken with the details of such killings as you eventually find necessary to carry your story, in order to avoid making them too realistic or gruesome ... Your studio is, of course, only too well aware of the difficulty which attended the release of the first FRANKENSTEIN picture in a great many parts of the world. The criticism at that time, directed at the picture, seemed to be based principally on the two elements of undue gruesomeness and an alleged irreverent attitude on the part of some of the characters ... With regard to the element of gruesomeness, this will depend largely upon the way the picture is actually shot, but we again urge you to use the utmost care and good taste, in order that your picture may meet with the widest possible favourable public reaction.¹²

The changes included removal of references to the Shelleys' pre-marital relationship, of the word "entrails" which "may be offensive to mixed audiences", a shot of a rat, and various references to God and Christian imagery. There were few gruesomeness-related specific requests, but the letter was at pains to emphasise that gruesomeness was nevertheless one of the film's chief censorship issues. Perhaps with *The Black Cat* in mind, they note that this issue turns not so much on events in the scripts as on "the way the film is actually shot." However, it is notable that the instances of "gruesomeness" cited do not include moments of implicit horror, but are still restricted to explicit sights and sounds, many of them also problematically violent.

On 7th December, James Whale met with two PCA employees in order to negotiate these changes. Whale's covering letter to Breen enclosing the agreed changes gives some idea of the spirit in which he went on to treat them:

... I think it best to send on the letter I had written immediately after the conference, as in your letter of December 5th there are several points about God, entrails, immorality and mermaids which you did not bring up again, and I am very anxious to have the script meet with your full approval in every detail before shooting it.¹³

The veiled sarcasm of this response makes clear the character of Whale's dealings with the PCA. As they commented in exasperation later on, he superficially cooperated with them while repackaging discouraged content with innuendo, and sneaking it back into the script and film. The rat became an owl, "entrails" was rephrased as "insides," the Christian references were rephrased, and, significantly, Whale offered Breen the guarantee that "the killings will all be minimized in the photographing of the scenes, most of them being in one little sequence to describe the reign of terror, and the whole of the film on this will be very short." While the changes of style shown in successive script drafts were congruent with the kind of change encouraged by the PCA and SRC in negotiation over prior horror films, they were at odds with the more categorical requests that the PCA were now delivering.

The PCA's concern over the script continued, and they described the final script as "top heavy with gruesome elements ...any further exaggeration along this line might make the picture unacceptable screen fare." They were right to be concerned: as well as containing eleven murders and a dizzying combination of terror and black comedy, *Bride's* script, as Whale's dry letter might suggest, contained many subtler and more mischievous touches of innuendo.¹⁴ In fact, in successive drafts, as visual gruesomeness was picked out of the script, so its reliance on implication and innuendo correspondingly increased.

After previewing the film twice, Breen did not grant a certificate straight away, but instead wrote to Zehner telling him that the PCA were "gravely concerned about it." Informing him that "the finished picture seems to us definitely to be a violation of our Production Code because of its excessive brutality and gruesomeness", Breen offers that "we have the thought that careful and intelligent editing of the picture may remove the difficulties suggested by the version we saw on Thursday." He asks for twelve sequences to be cut from the finished picture. While it seemed the PCA was now satisfied with *Bride's* treatment of religion, "excessive brutality and gruesomeness" was another matter, accounting for all but one of the cuts (the remaining cut request involved shots in the

prologue which showed too much of Elsa Lanchester's cleavage). Two requested cuts were of parts of the opening sequence where the Monster murders a peasant couple, two were from a later sequence where the body of a little girl is discovered, and two were of murders committed by Dwight Frye's character Karl. The remaining five were a shot of the Monster's bloody hands in the hermit's hut, a shot of a heart being removed from a jar with forceps, the Monster throwing a man from a roof, and the Monster stroking the face of a girl's corpse in a coffin. Finally, there was an entire graverobbing sequence in which Dr. Pretorius and his accomplices break into a tomb and crack open a young girl's coffin to harvest materials for the Bride, discussing their actions all the time. Justifying this extravagant sweep of deletions, which would have reduced the film's running time considerably, Breen explained:

You will note from these suggestions that we are seeking to lessen those phases of the picture which suggest excessive brutality and gruesomeness. We recognise that in a story of this kind, it is necessary that a certain amount of what might be called brutality and gruesomeness is necessary to the proper telling of the story, but the picture as we saw it the other day is likely to be quite offensive, and to result in a very definite unfavourable audience reaction. It is our thought that the recommendations made herein above will accomplish much by lessening the brutality and gruesomeness, and that your story will suffer little, if any, as a result. Indeed, it is our considered unanimous judgment here that these eliminations will very materially help your picture from the general standpoint of entertainment.¹⁵

While the PCA were quite preoccupied with the explicit gruesomeness in *Bride*, one example among these deletions in particular strongly suggests that they began to notice and target more implicitly problematic elements and moments. They asked for the graverobbing scene mentioned above to be deleted, specifically mentioning the "talk of the young girl's body." Talk is in fact the most censorable thing about this scene, which aside from its macabre location offers no specifically horrific sights or sounds. It is far less visceral in the style of its filming than, for instance, the graverobbing scene in *Frankenstein* in which Fritz cuts down a corpse from a gibbet. We see only the moving and opening of the coffin. The corpse itself is not even seen in this scene, but is shown in the previous scene (in which the Monster discovers it) to be the cosmetically undecayed body of a beautiful young girl. The dialogue, however, reveals through heavy hints the action which is elegantly elided.

The scene in the film as released actually plays out exactly as scripted; Universal resisted some of the PCA's recommended deletions, retaining a number of the problematic scenes, including this one. In both the finished film and the script, a dissolve

clearly elides the main action of the scene, taking the audience from Pretorius removing his coat to reveal a surgical gown and commenting with ghoulish cheer, "I hope her bones are firm", to the men shifting the coffin back onto its shelf and commenting that it "heaves lighter now." In the next scene, we see Pretorius having a picnic dinner of cold chicken and wine on a coffin, and raising his glass to "the well articulated skeleton of Madeleine Ernestine ... white and clean as a hound's tooth ... neatly piled and tied into a bundle, with the skull atop" – which we see in close up, sitting on the coffin next to the wine. The PCA did not ask for this last shot to be deleted, and in fact suggested that the scene now begin with Pretorius eating dinner with the skeleton. This is significant; arguably, the most gruesome and shocking thing in this scene is not the sight of the skeleton but in the dialogue which implies the unseen work of stripping the girl's flesh from her bones and dumping the residue back in the coffin. The PCA were asking for a deletion apparently more for its affective power than for its visual gruesomeness.

After a conference meeting attended by Laemmle Jr., Whale, Zehner and Breen, Universal argued the PCA down from twelve deletions to six. They managed to retain two of the Monster's murders and a shot of the little girl, one of Karl's murders, the shot of the Monster's bloody hands and his encounter with the corpse, and Pretorius' graverobbing scene. The other deletions were made, bringing the film down to a trim 75 minute running time. Breen's letter to Zehner, finally granting *Bride* formal Code approval after another viewing of the recut film, still warns:

... it is more than likely that this picture will meet with considerable difficulty at the hands of political censor boards, both in this country and abroad. The very nature of the production is such as to invite very critical examination on the part of these censor boards, and you may well expect difficulty with it wherever the picture is shown ... It is the kind of a picture which is acceptable under the letter of our Production Code, but very dangerous from the standpoint of political censorship.¹⁶

The reference to *Bride*'s very "nature" as a horror film being problematic *per se* is a departure for PCA and SRC policy, While, as we have seen, Colonel Joy had expressed such views in internal correspondence at the beginning of the cycle, internal censors had never openly said as much in correspondence with studios themselves. Along with the beginnings of requests for deletion which turn on affective power rather than visual and aural explicitness, this is a sign that the case of *Bride* marks a change of direction in the PCA's treatment of horror.

Bride of Frankenstein, on release, was one of the cycle's biggest box office successes – and it also ran into moderate difficulty with “political censorship”, as the PCA cannily described local censor boards. In Kansas City, as I mentioned in Chapter Two, *Variety*'s reporter commented on how local anti-horror campaigning had acted as effective publicity for the film: local newspapers “went after the ‘Frankenstein’ picture at the Tower and warned against children seeing it ... so biz way up.”¹⁷ As I have argued in my last two chapters, the right degree of outcry could do the work of the sort of sensational hyperbole that theatres themselves aimed for in promotion.

Bride of Frankenstein's local deletions were fewer and less extensive than those undergone by *The Black Cat* and *The Raven*, but more than those which affected *Werewolf of London*, *Mad Love* or *The Invisible Man*. While Kansas, New York and Massachusetts approved it without eliminations, the Canadian boards were harsher: British Columbia passed it with an adult permit, Quebec cut the line which referred to the Monster's creation “in God's own image” (as did Pennsylvania), and Alberta made four cuts, three of which were entire scenes.

Significantly, while all four cuts were for gruesomeness, two of them related not to a shocking sight but to implication-laden dialogue on the subject of graverobbing from the film's villain, Dr. Pretorius. One is a mention of the “very fresh” heart he has obtained for the Bride, the other the dialogue scene in the tomb which I previously mentioned, in which Pretorius banters with his accomplices before and after harvesting the girl's skeleton. This last was a deletion which, as I mentioned, the PCA requested but failed to achieve – while they might have failed in this instance to gain their desired result in negotiation with Universal, they had at least successfully anticipated the reaction of local boards.¹⁸

Bride's most serious local difficulty was with Ohio's board of censors, which asked for nine cuts, all of them related to “gruesomeness and brutality”, and all but one excising either an entire scene or a substantial portion of a scene. Most of the cuts excise murders by the Monster, but two are for ghoulish innuendo-bearing dialogue from Pretorius (the “fresh heart” line, and another quip about the Monster's demands). Universal understandably considered these severe cuts “very drastic and harmful to the success of this picture,” and on 7th May asked for the PCA's help in order to get as many as possible of these cuts re-instated in time for its Cleveland bookings. After negotiating,

the PCA managed to argue the Ohio board down to both cuts of Pretorius' dialogue, and one full scene, the finding of a small girl's body. However, after Universal's lack of co-operation earlier on, the PCA were not best pleased about being called on to intervene. Breen wrote to Will Hays during the negotiations with Ohio, speculating on the wider censorship issues brought up by the affair. Explaining that after the PCA had seen the finished picture they "told the studio it was unacceptable" and asked for eliminations, Breen tells Hays that discussion with Whale, Laemmle Jr. and Zehner had turned on:

... a number of the shots which, while acceptable under the letter of the Code, were definitely dangerous from the standpoint of political censorship. All three of the Universal executives waved aside our decision in the matter and told us they were willing "to take a chance" on these eliminations.

Horror's absence from the Production Code seems to have given the studios some leverage, even with the PCA's more aggressive negotiating stance, and increasing willingness to hold up a film's release until it was satisfied. *Bride of Frankenstein* was a case where the debate between internal censors and horror producers went down to the wire, raising crucial questions for the PCA about the cycle's future treatment. After recapitulating his warning to Universal about local censorship, Breen gets to his main point:

... what responsibility, if any, have we to defend a picture before political censor boards, where the studio deliberately refuses to accept our counsel in the matter and decides to risk mutilation?

In making the eliminations, the Ohio censor board has run true to form. Six of the eliminations are of the exact kind which censor boards, everywhere, almost invariably delete from pictures. We expected these eliminations, and now we have them.

This whole matter is important because, as you know, I have been trying to bring it about that, when we approve a picture under the Code, it is our responsibility to defend our decision against censor mutilation at all costs. But with these border-line cases -- instances where scenes, or lines, or episodes in the picture, are acceptable under the Code -- how far ought we to go?

You may argue that matters which are so generally unacceptable to censor boards, ought to be unacceptable under the Code. In most instances, this is true, but in the case of so-called horror pictures, crime films, etc., it is not always so.¹⁹

Bride of Frankenstein marked a point at which internal censorship of horror cut far enough into elements a studio felt to be important to a film's success with audiences to make the producers point-blank refuse some of the cuts. *Bride's* impressive box office success, however, made a clear case for why producers would want to refuse the kind of

thorough censorship the PCA was working towards. Even with controversy and local censorship, they could do spectacularly well out of the right horror movie, the PCA's views of longer term industry interests notwithstanding.

The PCA's patchily successful attempts to seek out *Bride's* censorship issues seem to have been a learning process which resulted in a more aggressive, comprehensive and thoughtful monitoring of horror films. The films that appeared from December 1934 on were warning in no uncertain terms about the dire consequences of horror content, without reference to the Code. The emphasis of censorship negotiations, as I will elaborate, correspondingly shifted from individual instances of "gruesomeness" to an overall problematic emotional effect which fell more obviously within the Production Code's remit. It also marked the beginning of a more openly confrontational negotiating stance upon horror from the PCA, consistent with Breen's general policy upon inherently problematic films and kind of film.²⁰

There are two possible explanations, not mutually exclusive but complementary, for how the PCA managed to overcome their difficulties, formulate and implement a successful horror censorship policy after the cases of *The Black Cat* and *Bride of Frankenstein*. The first of these is that the cumulative effects of PCA and SRC experience negotiations over horror led them to gradually develop their understanding of horror as a censorship problem. This alone, however, does not account for their rapid development, three years into the cycle, of a new model of horror censorship which now expanded the definition of censorable horror content far beyond visual gruesomeness. In my next two sections I will argue that the independent censorship campaign provided the PCA with a way of integrating an affective, rather than visual model of horror into Code-based censorship practice.

4.3 The Payne Fund Studies and *Our Movie-Made Children*: how independent campaigners integrated anti-horror criticism into the social effects argument

As I argued in my last chapter, the 1930 Production Code's global categorisation of censorship problems into the "sin that attracts" and the "sin that repels" had little room for

the ambivalent dynamic of attraction and repulsion that marketing and reviews located as the key to the horror cycle's appeal to audiences. The SRC and PCA, up to 1935, censored horror as "gruesomeness" - as a kind of screen violence which could be dealt with by making visual instances less intense, more implicit and elliptical. This meant there was a concomitant lack of attention to the broader discourses through which other agencies discuss horror either as a pleasure or as a problem.

Such problems did not afflict local censorship boards, who were freer to cut and even ban films and justify their decisions only briefly and anecdotally. Neither did they trouble independent censorship campaigners, who could resort to anti-horror arguments established since the 1920s without having to make them consistent with the Production Code's reasoning.

What was needed was a rationale for horror censorship which treated it as basically affective but was compatible with the Production Code's view of cinema. In my next chapter, I will argue that just such a model of horror was provided for the PCA by 1934 by the high-profile media discussion of the Payne Fund Studies and by the bestselling popular digest based upon them.

The Payne Fund Studies were the first substantial contributions to the debate to accord a significant place to horror. Unlike the Production Code, the studies and *Our Movie Made Children* treat horror as an important category of potentially problematic film – testament to the pro-censorship ire raised by the horror craze between the writing of the Code in 1930 and the completion of the studies in 1932.

As I discussed in my Introduction, in 1933, the publication of the Payne Fund Studies and the resulting media discussion gave pro-censorship arguments based on the social effects of cinema highly publicised scientific support. These psychological studies were the first to examine the effect of cinemagoing on children. While they claimed to be disinterested, as I will explain below, in fact the social scientists who conducted them were funded clandestinely by the major Protestant censorship pressure group, the Motion Picture Research Council. Even more importantly for the censorship question at large, the studies were published at the behest of this pressure group in a popularised, scaremongering digest, *Our Movie-Made Children* by Henry James Forman (New York:

Macmillan, 1933), which became a best-seller before the studies themselves were even published.

Forman wrote three articles for *McCall's* in autumn 1932 promoting the studies and claiming they had found major evidence of the negative effects of cinema viewing. *Our Movie Made Children* was widely promoted and reviewed, and Forman even did a press tour. Both Forman and Rev. Short, President of the MPRC, spent much of the next year promoting the book further through articles and public speeches.²¹ Forman made *Our Movie Made Children* an anti-cinema polemic which was criticised by the MPRC itself. Jowett *et al*, in *Children and the Movies*, give a full and useful account of the wrangling which went on within the MPRC over the studies and particularly over *Our Movie Made Children*. While Short defended the tone of the manuscript, both the scientists involved and other MPRC members frequently commented on its rhetorical extremity and distortions, and even vacillated over its publication. Forman, however, had an independent contract with Macmillan, which would have made it difficult for the MPRC to stop publication if they decided to do so.²²

It was in this form that the studies reached the American public, however. Moreover, the studies themselves concentrate on data, and offer conclusions about cinema only briefly and hesitantly; it is Forman who unites – and distorts – this data into a coherent argument concerning the effects of cinema. *Our Movie-Made Children* arguably had a far greater direct impact on the media, and on the cinema debate, than did the more cautious studies themselves. As I will elaborate, the book is also responsible for providing both censorship campaigners and the PCA for the first time with a developed and substantial argument which integrated horror and the horror cycle into broader pro-censorship arguments concerning social effects.

Since the wider reasoning of censorship campaigners rested on the premise that cinema experiences tend to persist and to have social consequences, horror censorship needed to specify, theorise and to some extent demonstrate the relationship between cinematic horror and its effects beyond the cinema doors. However, the social effects argument's reliance on the concept of imitative behaviour posed serious problems for an overwhelmingly fantastic and abstracted genre such as horror. While some horror films, like *Murders in the Zoo*, were both contemporary in setting and non-fantastic in plot, public perceptions of the cycle remained more shaped by major box office hits like

Frankenstein. Unsurprisingly, no critic seriously attempted to argue that horror films would cause a crime wave of vampirism and mad science among working-class youth, although some more recent horror films and cycles have been repeatedly subject to criticisms and social panic over imitative behaviour.²³

The Payne Fund Studies and their dissemination into the media provided censorship campaigners with a model of horror's effects which could integrate anti-horror arguments into their broader argument concerning social effects. It therefore gave independent anti-horror arguments more force, by making them more articulate, giving them (alleged) scientific support, and connecting them more clearly to the broader cinema censorship debate.

This benefit to independent censors also arguably resulted in the Production Code Administration's adoption of a similar line of reasoning themselves. I argued in this chapter and the last that the SRC and PCA had difficulty developing an adequate horror censorship policy because they tended to deal with it in the way they dealt with violence and (to a degree) sex, as if it were primarily manifested in specific problematic kinds of sights and sounds. This made it difficult to anticipate instances like that of *The Black Cat*, where an apparently tolerable sequence generated strong reactions from both audiences and censors. Local censors were able to move more freely in cutting moments which seemed to them too evocative of horror, since they were under far less pressure than the PCA to justify their decisions or explain how they stemmed from some broader policy.

In order to develop a more effective censorship policy on horror, the PCA would need to be able to pre-empt such concerns. Their broader purpose and intent as an institution, as I argued in my Introduction, was to supersede independent censorship by integrating all possible grounds of objection to a film into their own censorship analysis, and negotiation with studios before films' release. They therefore needed a more global theory of horror as a censorship problem than they currently possessed. *Our Movie Made Children's* discussion of horror integrated objections to the cycle regarding "nerves" and psychological effects into the broader pro-censorship discourse of social effects. It therefore provided and widely disseminated just such a global theory of horror effects. This theory, which was also congruent with the reasoning of the Production Code, could potentially unite the currently disparate objections to horror films raised by the PCA and by local boards and the independent campaign.

The Payne Fund Studies were undertaken from 1928 to 1932 by teams of psychologists and sociologists from prominent contemporary university departments, including the sociology department of the University of Chicago, at the time the leading sociology department in the United States. Some of the authors, like Herbert Blumer, went on to become quite eminent in their fields. The research methods of the studies' psychologists "ranged from physiological studies (using such devices as the psychogalvanometer and the wired bed; see photo section), through questionnaires, to open-ended interviews, autobiographies, content analysis and statistically standardised tests."²⁴ However, as I explained in my Introduction, the studies were initiated and surreptitiously supervised by a major censorship pressure group, the MPRC, led by a campaigner known for his volatility and the extremity of his views, the Reverend William Short. Their execution and publication was plagued by academic controversy resulting from this funding, and from Short's increasing pressure on the more disinterested authors to argue the conclusions he was hoping to see.²⁵

Two of these studies in particular included sections which were relevant to horror and examined affective fear during cinemagoing. Herbert Blumer's *Movies and Conduct* analysed interviews and "motion picture autobiographies" from children and young people, and included a chapter on the affect of terror;²⁶ and W. S. Dysinger and Christian A. Ruckmick's *The Emotional Response of Children to the Motion Picture Situation* measured physical stimulation levels in child and adult audiences.

Herbert Blumer's *Movies and Conduct* attempted a qualitative analysis of cinematic affect, examining the longer-term effect of particular genres and situations on juvenile spectators. Blumer investigated fear in the cinema, including horror affect, and cinematic affect in general, via interviews conducted with two hundred and thirty seven children between the third and seventh grades, and four hundred and fifty-eight written "cinema autobiographies" from high-school students, in which they talked of the place cinemagoing had played in their lives and personal histories. The nature of Blumer's data means that his study contains far more analytic and interpretative work than the other studies.

Blumer outlines two theories of cinema-going in his introduction: that of catharsis (cinematic affect provides an emotional outlet, a controlled space where intense

emotional experiences may be undergone outside the social environment) and of social effects (spectators' emotional reactions to various elements of a film can prompt imitative behaviour based on the film). He claims to be an unbiased researcher primarily interested in reasoning from evidence to conclusion, and some of his analysis in fact tends to militate against a simple application of the social effects theory to cinema spectatorship – and horror spectatorship in particular.²⁷ For instance, Blumer devotes some space to charting the importance of films, and horror films in particular, in childrens' play. He points out that the theories of the German psychologist Groos (who argued that play in animals and humans is a preparation for adult roles) are not quite applicable to much of film-based play:

Yet in the main the movie rôles taken by children are too confusing ... contradictory ... many are of a weird and bizarre character, such as in the imitation of Dracula mentioned above; and many represent characters outside the range of modern experience ... it is apparent that most of the rôles never have an opportunity to materialize in adult behavior.²⁸

Blumer acknowledges here the basic problem of mapping a model of imitative behaviour onto films like those of the horror cycle, with their melodramatic and often fantastic character and their basic ambivalence. He also concludes that film-based play, while important to children, does not appear to have an impact on their development.

Because the studies were initiated in 1928, the horror cycle emerged in the course of Blumer's study. *Movies and Conduct* especially is attentive to the early films of the cycle when dealing with terror and fear in cinema viewing, in particular *Dracula* and *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. However, it remains the case that Blumer's observations about cinematic terror are less specific about horror *per se* than they might have been had the studies begun in 1931. They would need to be specifically applied to generic horror to be useful as an argument for its censorship. This gap would be bridged, as we shall see, by Forman, who, writing later and less objectively, made more of the difference between 'consciously designed' and incidental terror in order to specifically attack the horror cycle.

He claims that the problem of terror as cinematic affect has been "conspicuously ignored".²⁹ He notes the importance of fear and terror in the range of cinemagoing emotions: the frequency with which respondents of all ages report it, and how often they recall that it formed an important part of their earliest cinema experiences.³⁰ After citing six respondents who were afraid during *The Phantom of the Opera* (four of whom

mention the unmasking scene), he comments that they show the intensity of affect which can be produced by “a picture which is consciously designed around the themes of mystery and fear.”³¹ Blumer notes that particular mystery thriller films - “such pictures as the “Phantom of the Opera,” “Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde,” “The Gorilla,” “The Cat Creeps,” “The Lost World”” crop up repeatedly as the locus for respondents’ experiences of cinematic terror. He observes that most experiences of fright in his data tend to result from such “consciously designed” mystery films, although he does not analyze in more detail the effect of particular elements or scenes in films, such as the above-cited unmasking scene in *Phantom of the Opera*.

Blumer draws on his interviews to theorize in detail the affective workings of cinematic terror, which he characterizes as provoking a particular type of “emotional possession”:

The psychological characteristics of emotional possession, as we may infer them from the accounts given, are essentially a stirring up of feeling, a release of impulse, and a fixation of imagery. The individual is so preoccupied with the picture that its imagery becomes his own. The impulses, which correspond to the images, are called into play and encouraged, and the individual seems swept by intense feelings. ... There are easily discerned physical expressions ... such as the shrinking and avoidance in the case of fright ... Emotional possession may also show its presence in the field of perception. In states of fright the individual perceives strange objects—the slight noise, the flicker of the light, the crossing shadow are magnified by his perception far beyond their real significance ... To have induced emotional possession is a mark of the effectiveness of dramatic art ... This is probably also what the movie-goer seeks: a picture which has a “kick” to it, one that literally jolts him out of himself, one that figuratively pierces his shell, dissolves his existing feelings and attitudes, and sets his impulses and imagery in a new direction.... impulses usually latent or kept under restraint gain expression or seriously threaten to gain such expression. ... The state is usually short-lived yet while it is experienced impulse is released and self-control reduced.³²

A strong continuity is immediately apparent between the language Blumer uses to describe “emotional possession” here, and that of trade press analysis of the “emotional horror kick”, and horror marketing itself. The emotional intensity, the loss of control which “jolts [the spectator] out of himself”, and the implied absorption in the intense emotional experience horror provides, all bear an impressive resemblance. Blumer categorises several sorts of emotional possession: “fright, sorrow, love and excitement”, all of which he maps onto the same template. Importantly, he characterises all of these experiences, including fright, as pleasurable and actively sought out by spectators.

Blumer goes on to emphasise the fact that for many respondents “emotional possession” left a residue which lingered in the imagination. Various interviewees are quoted

describing experiences of terror in the cinema (largely inspired by horror and mystery melodramas) which had repercussions for days and even years. However, Blumer is noncommittal throughout about whether such experiences, although clearly important to those who report them, can be said to have negative effects:

The inability on the part of well-intentioned people to visualize just how the child's mind and feelings may be disturbed by gruesome and frightening pictures is shown by the recommendations occasionally made to children to see pictures [like *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*] ... The chief objective of this discussion is not that, however, of seeking to assess the value or harm of showing such kinds of pictures to children. It is difficult perhaps to evaluate motion pictures in this respect. While, as we have seen, many informants declare that the witnessing of a terrifying picture has left some permanent effect on them, in the main the effect was temporary.³³

While Blumer guardedly observes in his conclusion some that some of his interviewees claim that “emotional possession” by terror in a film affected their long-term psychological development, he also observes that most of the instances he catalogues appear to have had no such effect.

Forman's emotive and didactic bestseller on the Studies, *Our Movie Made Children*, on the other hand, has no such qualms. Forman has a whole chapter on horror, giving it an increased prominence which arguably stems from the progress of the horror cycle and its attendant controversy. Forman's collation of various fragments of autobiographies from Blumer's study reorganises them, as we will see, into a more fully developed narrative of horror's long-term psychological effect.

Our Movie Made Children devotes a chapter to “Horror and Fright Pictures”, which offers a popularised and partial summary of the findings of Blumer's *Movies and Conduct*, backed up with statistics taken from Dysinger and Ruckmick's study. Informed by the censorship lobby's outcry against horror, *Our Movie Made Children*'s chapter on horror expands creatively on Blumer's work. Forman's social effects argument in *Our Movie Made Children* overcomes the problem of imitative behaviour by concentrating attention on the psychological effects of horror *affect* rather than on those of horror narratives, and the problem of spectators' enjoyment of horror by downplaying the pleasures of cinematic terror as much as possible.

Forman takes notions about sensation and the nerves as the starting point in his narrative of horror effects. At the beginning of his chapter on horror, Forman complains

that “the whole problem of terror and excruciating elements in pictures has been conspicuously ignored by producers and censors alike.”³⁴ Respecting effects on the nerves, he cites the Dysinger-Ruckmick study as proof that children’s emotional reactions are “three times that of the average adult.”³⁵ Arguing that Ruckmick and Dysinger’s psycho-galvanometric measures of increased pulse, and Renshaw’s analysis of disturbed sleep “interpret themselves in the answers and autobiographies of the young people”, Forman claims that all these studies, via different methods, come to the same conclusion about the deleterious effects of horror and terror on young people. Despite this, the other studies Forman mentions are as reluctant as Blumer is to posit definite conclusions.

“No effect”, Forman claims, “upon the brain and nerve cells is, as we know ... ever wholly wiped out.”³⁶ His argument concerning the damage that cinematic fear inflicts divides such fear into two categories. The first category, a popularised version of Blumer’s similar argument, concerns children who suffer sympathetic agony and fear based on a naïve identification with characters, and an inability to categorise onscreen action as fictional. This argument refers to incidents in a number of non-horror films, such as the death of a girl falling from a skyscraper in *Skyscraper Souls*. Forman’s second argument, on the other hand, deals with films which deliberately and actively elicit fear from the spectator, and therefore focuses specifically on horror as a genre, quoting almost exclusively from horror films. Horror films, Forman writes, “seem to be responsible for more fright caused to children than many times their number of ordinary pictures.”³⁷ They produce an emotional effect, Forman seems to argue, which operates like a much more intense version of the sympathetic agony which can cause children to suffer in “ordinary pictures”. However, the effects of horror films persist for much longer than those of other genres, manifesting in nightmares and sleep disturbances, waking nightmares and even hallucinations:

Many boys and girls confessed to expressing their emotions before danger pictures not only by biting their finger-nails, twisting their caps, hiding their eyes ... but by jumping out of their seats, getting under the seat, running home, being terrified by shadows, avoiding dark streets. One boy was afraid, after a particularly gruesome picture, that a trapdoor would open in the pavement and swallow him. A girl declared with positiveness that the sidewalk rose up behind her as she hurried home. Approximately one-third of the children in one class examined by Dr. Blumer, “mention having had bad dreams following upon their experiences, including shock, nightmares, keeping one’s head under the blankets, asking to sleep with mother and father, crying out in sleep and falling out of bed.”³⁸

The narrative Forman creates from Blumer's autobiographies is suggestively Gothic. The affect of horror begins within the cinema as a reaction, follows its victims through the city streets, and finally, like Dracula himself, attacks them at home in their own beds. It is notable, too, that the "nervous reactions" described by Forman gradually diverge further and further from the plot which triggered them. The examples in which the streets themselves appear to mutate almost into horror sets or visual effects (the trapdoor, the rising sidewalk) are particularly interesting in the context into which Forman places them. The modulated terror and horror of the horror film cedes for Forman's spectator to a disturbingly distorted and dreamlike perception of the world around them, and finishes in the formless chaos of fears which constitutes the nightmare.

Forman stresses the persistence of this effect in the form of phobias and "shattered nerves" years after the cinematic experience which inspired them, and cites various interviewees of Blumer's whose terrors appeared to persist into adulthood – but with much more certainty as to the negative effect of horror spectatorship on their psychological development. The arguments which substituted for the more usual "social effects" line of reasoning focus on nerves and on nightmares, on the lingering power of the affective experience of horror, in fact, over the unconscious mind. Forman attempts to describe and quantify this damage in a way which could be integrated with arguments about imitative behaviour. This leads him to move from sociology to psychology, from psychology to the territory of psychoanalysis. In order to analyse and argue the harm horror films might do, censorship advocates were frequently forced to resort to explanations underpinned by popular Freudianism which asserted that horror was dreamwork. This approach is implicitly contradictory, relying on ideas from one discipline, psychoanalytic theory, yet claiming its authority from another discipline, the social sciences.

However, such theoretical inconsistencies had little effect on the success of Forman's rhetoric. By drawing implicitly upon psychoanalysis and on the existing anti-horror discourse I discussed in Chapter Two and Chapter Three, Forman constructed a model of the negative social affects of horror spectatorship which, unlike previous pro-censorship discussions of horror, explained why and how it was problematic, justifying its importance for the contemporary censorship campaign. Forman's argument refocused the priorities of horror censorship away from individual visual and aural instances of

“gruesomeness”, and towards the problematic qualities of horror’s affect itself, and its effect on the vulnerable psyche.

Lea Jacobs has argued compellingly that *Our Movie Made Children* and related, sensationalised reports of the studies brought the censorship debate far more squarely into the national press, and the public eye, than it had been before. *McCall’s* published extracts from *Our Movie Made Children*, and *The Saturday Review of Literature*, *Parent’s Magazine* and *Christian Century* all published articles on the Studies.³⁹

Although, as I discussed in my Introduction, the MPRC were not themselves officially in favour of federal censorship, much of the independent censorship campaign was, and they used the Studies’ media presence and *Our Movie Made Children* especially to lobby for it. The MPPDA tracked this publicity with much concern, especially since it came during a period of rising pressure upon this issue in particular, as well as the wider censorship crisis of 1933-1934. By the end of 1932, over forty religious and educational organisations had passed resolutions in favour of such federal regulations.⁴⁰ Jacobs notes that Will Hays’ papers in 1933 and 1934 “contain regular reports of pamphlets, newspaper articles, even sermons, which make reference to the Payne Fund Studies”, and that the MPPDA even sponsored a 1937 book-length response to *Our Movie Made Children* and other publicity around the Studies, Raymond Moley’s *Are We Movie Made?*⁴¹ The MPPDA’s attention to the issue provides a possible explanation for the PCA’s turn, after 1934, to a horror censorship policy which emphasised emotional effects much more than before. In the contexts of their established strategies for pre-empting local and independent censorship issues, and thereby establishing their own organisation as the main site of censorship disputes, negotiation, and resolution, this change in strategy might be usefully seen as an attempt to integrate the social effects anti-horror criticism of *Our Movie Made Children*.

4.4 The PCA’s transformation of their horror censorship policy in 1935

Four other horror films – *The Raven* (Universal, 1935, dir. Lew Landers), *Werewolf of London*, *Mark of the Vampire* and *The Crime of Dr. Crespi* were produced in the latter

part of *Bride of Frankenstein's* production period, and all were released between May and July 1935, a period which, as I mentioned in my Introduction, saw the market more crowded with horror films than it had ever been. The PCA's dealings with these films show a consistent negotiating stance towards horror. They began in a firm opening position with strong warnings about horror's negative affective and social results, followed by a comprehensive sweep of objectionable elements in both scripts and finished film, which shows a noticeably expanded definition of the gruesome and the censorable. Censorship negotiations tended to be lengthy, and frequently turned on the implicit and affective aspects of horror as well as problematic sights and sounds. Cutting by local censorship boards, on the other hand, markedly decreased in these cases. In fact, now the majority of cuts and alterations to horror films were taking place before their release. Nearly four years after Colonel Joy had expressed the desire to be so, the PCA were finally becoming the main site of horror censorship.

The most likely explanation for this new approach to horror is that it is a product *both* of the PCA's recent experience with two horror cases, *The Black Cat* and *Bride of Frankenstein*, and of recent high-profile media discussion of horror's social and psychological effects in the wake of the Payne Fund Studies. Indeed, examination of the PCA's negotiations over other horror films in 1935 supports both explanations. Evidence for the PCA's evolution of their horror policy through experience is provided by their repetition of stances and even phrases used in previous horror cases. Evidence for the latter is provided by the new, firm emphasis on affect and social effects in PCA correspondence over horror.

The PCA's attitude to other horror films evolved rapidly during *Bride's* production period. In December 1934, after reading the first script for *Mark of the Vampire*, Breen pronounced it satisfactory, and gave only the mild warning "We presume that the ghost and horror sequences will be done with due delicacy."⁴² The PCA's treatment of this film is somewhat comparable to that of *The Black Cat* – attentive in their surveying, but minimal in their interference. They asked for few deletions. Only a month later, the initial draft script of Universal's *Werewolf of London* resulted in an immediate conference with the film's producer, resulting in the promise of substantial plot changes, in stipulations about the style of filming, and in a strongly worded general warning about the effect of horror on the film industry.⁴³ In March, the draft script for *The Raven* received similar attention: an immediate conference which secured a series of promises about the film's

content, and a strong warning about horror as such.⁴⁴ This change of direction in the PCA's treatment of horror is, I would hypothesise, the product of both experience and the narrative of horror' negative effect provided by recent media attention to the Payne Fund Studies.

Writing to Hays about *Bride's* censorship in May, Breen would voice his frustration that the studio had refused to delete scenes which were later the cause of most of the film's censorship difficulties in Ohio. He claims that, in the case of *Bride* at least, the PCA was now able to predict local censor behaviour. The local censorship histories of *Mark of the Vampire*, *Werewolf of London* and *The Raven* suggest that since *The Black Cat* the PCA had indeed learnt to successfully analyse horror as a censorship problem and predict the behaviour of local boards.

The negotiations over *Werewolf of London* and *The Raven* also show a more basic change in the way the PCA understood gruesomeness and the workings of horror. As I mentioned before, the initial warnings that these two films received were far more stringent than the mild comment with which the PCA had recently greeted the first draft of *Mark of the Vampire*. In January 1935, as the wrangling over blasphemy, horror and innuendo in *Bride of Frankenstein's* script extended into the film's production period, Universal were preparing to put *Werewolf of London* into production. On the 15th January, a PCA conference meeting with *Werewolf's* producer resulted in a very extensive set of stipulations, modifications and warnings largely designed to "soften" the horror elements. The PCA once again openly voiced the opinion that the horror cycle was itself a problem, warning that "if the story is photographed in a fashion to create nervous shock among women and children, it might be held up as contrary to the good and welfare of the industry."

The phrasing of this warning is telling. From *Werewolf of London* onwards, in negotiations over horror films, the PCA define gruesomeness and horror content primarily as that which they believe will produce problematic affective responses, especially in vulnerable spectators, rather than seeing gruesomeness merely as a series of onscreen events. Elements of a film were censorable for horror because of the response they might produce. Whereas before the PCA and SRC had treated gruesomeness as a series of concrete instances which were defined by graphic content

and taken to produce particular effects, now they defined gruesomeness as *whatever* produced such effects.

This distinction might appear subtle, especially given that the PCA continued to censor horror by requesting cuts and script alterations. However, it was crucial, because it greatly expanded the range of elements which the PCA attended to in search of horror content. For instance, as I mentioned above, one of the conditions the PCA agreed at the conference on *Werewolf* was that the filmmakers take care “with regard to the serious effect upon impressionable audiences of screen-size shadows of horrors and their undue repetition.”⁴⁵ The troubles caused by *The Black Cat*’s off-screen evisceration scene had not been forgotten. A promise was extracted from the filmmakers that “the whole story will be photographed discreetly”. A further important change secured in this initial conference was that a “morality note” be introduced by bookending the film with morals about transgression. In the prologue a missionary would warn the protagonist that “the violation of beliefs and superstitions” would only lead to ill; and in the film’s closing moment the protagonist would make a deathbed confession to his wife that “he knew he had violated the laws of God and man and that his death was a deserved one.” In the film as shot, the transgression which leads to Dr. Wilfred Glendon’s fatal werewolf bite is his quest to find a flower which blossoms only by moonlight, in the mountains of Tibet. However, the prologue makes the nature of the taboo which is violated very vague and unclear, leaving the impression that it is a cursory addition to the plot whose basic purpose is to appease the PCA.

The filmmakers offering the addition of the transgression plot, and the PCA accepting it, both take it to lessen and mitigate the excesses of horror. If PCA concerns around gruesomeness largely revolved around effects on the nerves, and not on imitative behaviour, then how would transgression as a framing device lessen such effects? The suggestion is that, in marking out a distinction between Glendon and the audience, it limits their implication and empathy in his transformation into a monster.

Even more significant was their stipulation, at the same story conference, that the film “will not show on the screen the actual transvection of Glendon from man into wolf and will eliminate repulsive physical details.”⁴⁶ In other words, *Werewolf of London* was not at any time to show a werewolf on screen. The PCA were clearly being openly confrontational about *Werewolf*’s nature as a horror film. As well as their concern with

suggestion and shadowplay, and the way the narrative frames horror content, they were also aiming squarely at the centre of the film's gruesomeness and visual horror, the monster itself.

Universal, unsurprisingly, were not keen to cut their werewolf. When a new script draft was sent to the PCA at the end of January, Breen replied with a stiff letter, citing again "the general good of the industry" and "women and children" – and noting that despite the agreement not to show "actual transvection", two directions in the new script stated "And before our eyes we feel the horrible phenomena of transvection as man merges into wolf." An extraordinary response from Robert Harris of Universal to Breen stated that the studio agree that "the picture should not be unduly terrifying", so transvections into "the animal, wolf" had been eliminated in favour of "from our normal players to people of hirsute tendencies with naturally a pointing of the ears and noses and a lengthening of the fingers, not dissimilar to what was done to the picture "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde". It seems highly unlikely that *Werewolf of London*, a film which as I have mentioned, carefully models itself on previous Universal horror films, was ever intended to use a live wolf as its monster instead of an actor in make-up.⁴⁷ A week later, a telephone call between studio and PCA attempted to wrangle out the difficulties regarding "use of terrifying shadows, screen-sized shadows of wolves, or wolf-like men on the screen". Most of the conversation consisted of debate over the nuances of what constituted an unacceptably or acceptably "wolf-like man".⁴⁸ Robert Harris, the producer, complained a week later that:

... We have gone to the utmost limit to comply with the wishes of Mr. Breen ... even going to the extent of re-shooting the prologue which had been shot before we promised you there would be no wolves in the picture and on our own volition even eliminating the shadows of wolves. I mention this in evidence of our good faith ...⁴⁹

This was the last of the difficulty. Further script drafts were approved. The finished film, however, shows that while the PCA might have secured script changes, their visual stipulations were comprehensively ignored. The finished film included two lengthy transformation scenes. It contained numerous close-ups of Henry Hull looming intimidatingly at the camera in wolf make-up, lit from below. It also included a scene in which the werewolf's shadow gestures to and menaces a woman lying in bed, and another in which the transformed Glendon releases a wolf from a zoo in order to provide

a scapegoat for his crimes – a scene in which numerous live wolves are seen on camera.

Despite the fact that the film retains these numerous sequences, which the PCA had predicted would be troublesome, *Werewolf* had hardly any local censorship difficulties. British Columbia gave the film an adult permit, and Ontario cut several shots from the final struggle, but apart from this, the film was passed completely intact by all the major boards.⁵⁰ The PCA had asked for similar deletions from that particular scene after previews, but had failed to pass comment on any of the reinstated wolf and transformation material. Their concern over the shadowplay scene seems in hindsight perhaps overstated, given how much milder in content it is than that of *The Black Cat*. Even though the PCA did not achieve all the deletions and changes they asked for, their attentive interventions during scriptwriting and production undoubtedly toned down the film's horror content, and perhaps prevented greater local censorship difficulties.

The PCA's negotiations over *The Raven* followed a similar pattern. Commenting on the script, Breen wrote that "in this sort of story great care must be exercised concerning any evidence of excessive horror and brutality", and a conference was held to establish exactly what could and could not be shown onscreen. The agreed schema aimed to remove as much horror and gruesomeness, explicit and implied, as could be done without entirely obscuring the plot. The operation scene which mutilates Karloff's character could be shown in "no detail" other than a flash shot of a knife beforehand. Any shot of blood was also to be cut to a flash, and stipulations were made about how the instruments of torture which Lugosi's character collects could be shown. Most crucially, the appearance of Karloff's character would "never be inhumanly repulsive." The PCA went as far as reviewing shots of Karloff in make-up "in order to determine if they were suitable for screen presentation." This comprehensive sweep of horror relies on an understanding its affective power as depending upon a range of elements within the film form. It is also suggestive about how far the PCA were willing to go in their effects to excise as much horror from horror films as possible, and their growing open hostility to the cycle.

In the case of *The Raven*, the PCA accurately predicted local difficulties with the film. During production, Breen reminded the studio that "because of the stark realism of numerous elements of your story, you are running the risk of excessive horror."⁵¹ After

the preview, he commented again that “we find your story remains fundamentally unaltered.” While technically acceptable under the Code, he warned Universal in general that “the current accumulation of horror in motion pictures must of necessity cause continued concern.”⁵² The PCA’s predictions proved accurate: *The Raven* was cut by most of the major censor boards, with Karloff’s make-up and the torture machine, which the PCA had singled out as the most affecting elements, being the most consistently cut shots. Ontario rejected the film altogether, giving its reason as: “Featuring horror and shuddering melodrama. Full of fiendish and diabolical doings.”⁵³ *The Raven* was ultimately a mixture of failure and success for the PCA. They succeeded in identifying the presence of problematic horror elements intrinsic to the film’s basic story, and correctly predicted local censorship difficulties, but their attempts to secure changes from Universal were unsuccessful.

Arguably, extensive debate at the pre-production stage was in part a strategic move designed to show Universal that the inclusion of monster was problematic in itself, and horror as such was a legitimate censorship problem. It may be that they were being particularly pointed with Universal as they were by far the most major producer of horror films. While the case of *Werewolf of London* shows that the PCA were capable of employing their new understanding of horror to anticipate successfully the actions of local censorship boards, by now the PCA had determined to move beyond anticipating local censorship problems, from a reactive approach to a more proactive one. Their behaviour when dealing with all subsequent horror films made it clear that they were now openly hostile to horror content, and to the cycle.

4.5 “A horror picture at this time is a very hazardous undertaking”: explaining the end of the 1930s horror cycle

In the spring of 1936, the horror cycle came to an abrupt end after the release of *Dracula’s Daughter*, *The Walking Dead* and *The Devil Doll*. For two years, no film was produced or marketed as horror by a Hollywood studio. The abrupt end of the apparently profitable horror cycle in 1936 raises questions for any historical account, especially

given the fact that horror production was revived so successfully and so quickly after this two-year hiatus.

Most historical accounts of the end of the horror cycle which favour censorship as an explanation turn on important misconceptions about the role played by the supposed British horror ban, and often use the PCA's own explanations of the ban as their main source of information on the subject. Edmund Bansak, in a fairly typical account, states:

Universal's *The Raven* (1935) ... signalled the sudden end to the horror craze. Because of its torture theme, which incited considerable outrage in England, *The Raven* initiated a virtual ban on all horror films shown in the British Isles. ... The British market was vital to the Laemmles. The insistence of the British Board of Film Censors upon rating horror films with an "H" certificate was the kiss of death to Universal's horror exports. The studio's resulting losses could not have been much worse if horror films had been banned outright.⁵⁴

This explanation of the two year hiatus in horror production, from 1936 to 1938, attributes it to several factors. Firstly, it mentions that a British "virtual ban" upon horror films impeded the cycle's box office takings. Secondly, it states that this led to Universal's collapse, with the implication that given they were market leaders in horror production, an end to their production of horror would result in an end to the cycle.

Earlier accounts of horror which do not emphasise film cycles tend not to treat this question in much detail: Brunas *et al's Universal Horrors* merely notes in one line that "an outright ban on horror movies imposed by the British Commonwealth" led to a hiatus.⁵⁵ More recent accounts, devoting more attention to censorship in general, give the issue more space and tend to treat it in a similar manner to Bansak's account. David J. Skal attributes the hiatus straightforwardly to "overseas censorship concerns", and specifically to the 1935 British horror ban.⁵⁶ Rhona Berenstein, meanwhile, also suggests "Breen's more enthusiastic enforcement of the industry's Production Code" played a part, but places more emphasis on international censorship problems and the British ban in particular.⁵⁷

In this section I argue that examination of 1936 horror films' box office performance and censorship histories show most of these explanations to be inadequate, and the alleged British ban to be misreported by most scholars, and to have played a very different role to that which they claim. My own contention is that censorship was indeed by far the most important factor, but that the facts suggest that it did not end the cycle by impeding

horror films' box office performance, but rather by the PCA's application of direct pressure and persuasion to studios not to make horror films.

As I have argued, the PCA, in keeping with the broader aims of the Production Code, were interested in discouraging consistently problematic cycles and encouraging 'good' ones. Studios, and particularly Universal, who specialised in horror, were interested in minimising local censorship while conserving as much box office potential as possible. However, controversial cycles which remained profitable were still attractive to studios, particularly in the case of a cycle like horror where a moderate degree of controversy could even increase box office performance. While the good health of the film industry was in the interest of both parties, the PCA were prepared to have individual films and cycles make a loss in order to preserve the film industry's longer-term interests as conceived by the MPPDA and the Code.

I will argue in this section that the PCA approached horror films in 1936 with a two-pronged attack. They simultaneously sternly warned producers that horror films *per se* were unworkably problematic, more trouble than they were worth, and 'proved' this by objecting to every element they felt might result in affective reactions of horror and miring films in long and troublesome negotiations.

In the latter strategy, the PCA relied on their new working understanding of horror as primarily affective. In the former, they were much helped by the notion of Great Britain's supposed ban on horror films via the 'H' certificate. This 'ban', as I will explain, is alluded to by numerous scholars, including Skal, Berenstein and Altman, as a main cause of the cycle's end.⁵⁸ It was also widely believed in Hollywood's trade press and constantly alluded to by the PCA as proof that horror films were bad news for the industry. However, examination of British censorship data quickly reveals that such a ban never existed. It was an oversimplification of a more complex and less catastrophic situation, a misreported story. The PCA were apparently happy to use this story as leverage when dealing with horror producers, despite being in direct communication with the British Board of Film Censors and therefore presumably having easy access to the real facts of the case.

Given the finite, trend-led nature of film cycles in general, and that horror censorship abroad is alleged to have had such a catastrophic effect upon horror films' general box

office returns, it seems useful at this point to remember that in fact, as I explained in my Introduction, the domestic performance of horror films released in 1935 and 1936 were generally above average, with one major hit, *Bride of Frankenstein*, in 1935, and excellent local box office returns for *Dracula's Daughter* and *The Devil Doll* in mid-1936, just before horror productions ceased.

Available information would seem, therefore, to contradict Bansak's assertion that a 1935 British horror ban was primarily responsible for Universal's collapse. While horror itself remained consistently profitable, Universal made an overall loss in the Depression years of 1932, 1933 and 1935. Important as horror was to Universal, the length of the period of financial difficulty suggests that other long-term factors were the cause. In fact, the aging Laemmle had been turning down offers to sell up since 1929, and rumours and reports about Universal's sale regularly surfaced throughout the 1930s. Towards the end of 1935, a successful deal became public knowledge. J. Cheever Cowdin of Standard Capital, a New York-based syndicate who specialised in bailing out troubled companies, in partnership with Charles R. Rogers, an associate producer at Paramount, finally bought 80% of Universal's stock on March 13, 1936. Rogers was now functionally the head of the studio.⁵⁹ A new Universal management with no prior investment in horror films was far more likely to listen to the PCA's warnings concerning the censorship drawbacks of the cycle. On June 17 1936, Rogers announced in the *Los Angeles Daily News* that "Universal this year will go in for less tense drama and so-called 'horror' pictures, and make more pictures to amuse and enthuse audiences." James Curtis, reporting on this comment and perhaps picking up on its critical undertone, plausibly suggests that Rogers "took note of the increased hostility such product engendered abroad."⁶⁰

However, the takeover of Universal, while perhaps an influencing factor in the end of the cycle, cannot alone fully account for its ending. While Universal produced far more horror films than any other single studio, throughout the cycle Paramount, Warner Bros. and MGM produced horror films. More than half of the cycle overall was the product of other studios, including several horror films released in 1936: *The Walking Dead* (Warner), *The Devil Doll* (MGM), *The Crime of Dr. Crespi* and *Revolt of the Zombies* (both independent).

David J. Skal bases his account of the British ban primarily on an Associated Press article of August 23rd, 1935, reprinted widely in the American local press. This announced “‘Horror’” Films Taboo in Britain; ‘The Raven’ Last.” J. Brooke Wilkinson, secretary of the British Board of Film Censors, is reported as saying that the film would be the last horror film passed by the board. Wilkinson’s warning followed a comment from Edward Short, President of the board, that such films were “unfortunate and undesirable”. Wilkinson is reported as ascribing his own comments and Short’s as made because they knew “that similar productions were being planned in Hollywood,” and they felt need to give notice that future horrors would be judged “more strictly”. Wilkinson added that “If this notice is disregarded, the producers must take the consequences.”⁶¹ The other accounts of the British ban I have mentioned appear to depend as much as Skal’s on this article. Rhona Berenstein takes her account from Skal, while the Edmund Bansak passage quoted earlier seems to suggest that like Skal, he draws his account from the same article.⁶² However, as I will argue below, the evidence of British archival sources actually contradicts the facts about the supposed ban suggested here.

An article from *Variety* on May 6th, 1936, nearly a year later, appears to support the narrative of the Associated Press article. Here *Variety* reported the decision of Universal’s new management to cease production of horror films, and cited British censor hostility:

Reason attributed by U for abandonment of horror cycle is that European countries, especially England, are prejudiced against this type product. Despite heavy local consumption of its chillers, U. is taking heed to warning from abroad.

...

Studio’s London rep has cautioned production exec to scrutinize carefully all so-called chiller productions, to avoid any possible conflict with British censorship.⁶³

The PCA’s increasingly harsh warnings in 1935 and 1936 to studios submitting horror scenarios also cited such a BBFC ‘ban’. In fact, this *Variety* report appeared less than two weeks after the PCA had offered Universal a particularly strongly-worded warning regarding the synopsis of a proposed horror film, *The Human Robot* (eventually filmed in 1940 as *Man-Made Monster*). Regarding this, Breen stated that “[British] opposition to this kind of screen entertainment suggests that the making of a horror picture is a somewhat hazardous undertaking, from the standpoint of its general release.”⁶⁴ Breen further suggested that Universal carefully consult their Foreign Department “before

embarking on the actual production of this picture".⁶⁵ In the event, Universal shelved production of *The Human Robot*, and horror in general, less than weeks later.

The BBFC's position was one of the PCA's most important pieces of evidence that horror was such a "precarious undertaking". Writing to Warner in September 1935, after a discussion of a treatment of *The Walking Dead*, Breen appeared to be verging on attempts to completely dissuade the studio from making it:

Horror stories of all kinds are a precarious undertaking in these days, especially with respect to their likely reception at the hands of political censor boards. I think you know that the British Board in London has indicated a disposition not to approve out-and-out horror stories; and a number of boards in this country, and in Canada, have already demonstrated their dislike for this type of story by mutilating a number of "horror pictures" which have been released in recent months.⁶⁶

What, then, was the real negative effect of the 'H' certificate and the British censorship situation? It is certainly the case, as Bansak claims, that the British market was an important one for the major studios, constituting, according to Ruth Vasey, more than 30% of its total foreign income.⁶⁷ However, a comparison of the claims of the PCA and two brief newspaper articles about this 'ban', the three sources which underpin so many accounts of it, with actual available data on British censorship shows that they were both overplaying the severity of the situation and oversimplifying the complex and decentralised British censorship situation. While direct quotes from the BBFC certainly do reveal a broad antipathy to horror films, their actual practice reveals that where the censoring of individual films was concerned, they were hardly stricter or more damaging to horror's box office receipts than many of the Canadian boards. I will explain how this misreporting came about and elucidate it further, then suggest how exaggeration and misreporting of the British 'ban' were used *strategically* by the PCA to encourage an end to horror production.

One major reason why so many historical accounts of the horror cycle rely on the PCA's explanation of the British 'ban' is practical. Skal and Berenstein are both US-based scholars and rely on American archival sources for accounts of the British censorship situation. Moreover the majority of the BBFC's own 1930s records are not extant, thanks to the bombing of their London offices during the Second World War. However, much information still exists, especially given that British censorship primarily took place at the local government level during the 1930s. James C. Robinson has done informative work

with surviving records and sources in two books: *The British Board of Film Censors: Film Censorship in Britain, 1896-1950* and *Hidden Cinema: British film censorship in action 1913-75*. More recently, Sarah J. Smith's 2005 *Children, Cinema and Censorship* has also made use of this archival material to provide a much fuller account of the 'H' certificate and British horror censorship in the 1930s than has previously been available. Smith's work in particular substantially modifies the more usual account of British horror censorship in the 1930s.

First, Bansak's equation of the 'H' certificate and the post-*Raven* ban reported in the Associated Press article is inaccurate. The 'H' certificate was introduced in May 1933 – two years before *The Raven* – and moreover was a purely advisory classification which allowed horror films to be passed with a warning, without further cutting or precautionary banning.⁶⁸ Smith explains that the 'H' certificate was a compromise measure introduced after campaigning by the NSPCC, the Order of the Child and some other bodies for children to be banned from admission to horror films. She argues that it is more accurate to refer to it as the "Horrific label", as it was not a certificate as such and "therefore did nothing to stop unaccompanied A film attendance by young people." Indeed, she suggests that on the contrary, the Horrific label may have actively enticed the custom of children to "the forbidden fruit of 'unsuitable' films."⁶⁹

Moreover, while the BBFC may have claimed to be hostile to all horror films, a survey of their treatment of individual films show that their treatment of horror films was variable and inconsistent, analogous to neither PCA nor studio marketing classifications of horror. It also shows no evidence of a shift around 1935 to a stricter policy, as announced by both the Associated Press article and the PCA themselves. Throughout the 1930s, the BBFC passed some horrors uncut but bearing a Horrific label, while others were passed with an unlabelled 'A' certificate but with cuts. Which of these policies was applied a film bears no immediately obvious relation to its content or to its marketing, and James C. Robinson has suggested that this confused policy had far more to do with political vacillation over film censorship than with any attitude to horror itself.⁷⁰ *The Mummy* was passed uncut with an 'A' certificate alone, while *The Vampire Bat* was cut by 99 feet and still given a Horrific label. *Bride of Frankenstein*, *Mad Love*, *Mark of the Vampire*, and *Werewolf of London* all received the Horrific label. Most importantly, the alleged stricter attitude following *The Raven* never really appeared: BBFC treatment of horror films after this date is merely consistent with their established policy. *The Walking Dead* was

passed in April 1936 with an unlabelled 'A' certificate and a cut of 100 feet, while *The Devil Doll* received a Horrific label.⁷¹ *Dracula's Daughter* was passed uncut with an 'A' certificate.⁷² In July 1935 the London County Council proposed a nationwide ban to the Film Censorship Consultative Committee and the Home Office on children attending Horrific label films, but no real changes were made at the national level until June 1937 after the cycle's end, when the Horrific label was replaced with a formal H certificate which finally banned children's attendance.⁷³

British regional censorship of horror films was only sporadically stricter than this. More importantly, British local censorship of horror films was oriented almost entirely at preventing children from attending, rather than banning films altogether. Smith reports only two such bans: Birmingham and St. Helens banned children from attending *King Kong* in September 1933 and in December 1935, Middlesex, Surrey and Essex all instituted a more comprehensive prohibition against children attending any film that they themselves deemed horrific, regardless of BBFC classification.⁷⁴

However, the PCA by 1936, as can be seen, considered the horror cycle as a long-term problematic type of film whose production ought to be discouraged. The available evidence suggests that they may have taken advantage of the importance of the British market and the complexity and murkiness of its censorship situation, in order to use an alleged British 'ban' as leverage in their argument. The PCA's mediating correspondence with studios concerning the BBFC appears to have had an important interpretative function in explaining the more obscure and localised aspects of British censorship. Indeed, as Ruth Vasey has chronicled, part of the PCA's remit was to relay to studios difficulties with specific international markets.⁷⁵

The most significant factor in the ending of the horror cycle appears to have been the deliberate pressure the PCA put on studios and producers making horror films, the dire warnings and constant obstructions they threw in their way. By September 1935, the PCA were making their policy on horror clear from their first communications with producers – as Breen's warnings to Jack Warner over *The Walking Dead*, which I quoted earlier, make plain. Likewise, Universal were repeatedly warned in correspondence over *Dracula's Daughter* "that the making of a horror picture at this time is a very hazardous undertaking from the standpoint of political censorship generally."⁷⁶ Such warnings painted as black a picture as possible of local censorship prospects. The PCA, in

correspondence dealing with the cycle's final films, did their best to persuade producers and studios not to make more horror, and to remove all horror content from films in development. Any element understood to cause a reaction of horror was to be excised, and the differences between acceptability under the Code and to "political censor boards" was no longer quibbled over, or even mentioned. In fact, the plots of the final three films in the cycle, *The Walking Dead*, *The Devil Doll* and *Dracula's Daughter* were all substantially remodelled after the PCA made it clear that the original narrative was in itself unacceptable. The PCA's treatment of all three of these 1936 films follows the same pattern, suggesting a consistent policy on horror: the warning directing the studio not to make a horror film, followed by firm requests for a comprehensive remodelling of the film's plot and content. This policy mitigated against horror in several ways. The policy had an arguably deliberate filibustering effect, making production of a horror film contingent on time-consuming and obstructive negotiations and renegotiations over every aspect of production from script to make-up. It also resulted in final films which differed notably in content from the rest of the cycle. All three films began as relatively typical horror cycle entries but changed almost beyond recognition between initial plot outline and finished film. There is some evidence that PCA negotiations over these films even attempted to achieve a shift in genre.

The script of *Dracula's Daughter* was rejected outright by the PCA in its initial form. A PCA memo notes that the original script contained "countless offensive stuff which makes the picture utterly impossible for approval under the Production Code", and in particular "a very objectionable mixture of sex and horror". After Carl Laemmle Jr. and Breen talked about it personally in conference, the former agreed to a complete rewrite.⁷⁷ However, when the rewritten script was submitted and another conference meeting held on 23rd October to discuss it, the PCA requested another complete revision of the script, still unhappy with the "combination of sex and horror". As David J. Skal has pointed out, "what else was the vampire *besides* sex and horror?"⁷⁸ The elimination from a vampire film of any mixture of sex and horror is not likely to leave a great deal of vampire remaining in the film. As with *Werewolf of London*, PCA requests were aimed squarely at excising as much of the film's horror as possible. A six-page list of required changes to the rewritten script gives some idea both of the very different original plot and the scope of the changes which the PCA required:

I would suggest that ... where Dracula's soldiers sweep the countryside and bring to his castle a group of young women, with a sprinkling of men, that you affirmatively indicate that the purpose for which the young girls have been abducted is to provide dancing partners for the Count's assembled guests at the banquet.

...

Page B-9 - We suggest that Dracula do not take the girl in his powerful arms and carry her away out of the room ... we suggest that there be no shot of the girl lying on the couch. It is to be preferred that she sit on a chair "too terrified to move" ...

Page C-6 - We ask that you eliminate the shot showing Dracula in his chamber "crushing the limp figure of the girl in his arms" – this to get away from the definite sexual connotation. Maybe the scene could show the girls dancing.

On page E-46 we ask that you eliminate entirely the business of the Countess gathering John into her arms and the slow fadeout. This is important.⁷⁹

Other requests in the comprehensive list of changes to be made included the elimination of shots of rats, drunkenness at a party, and dialogue encompassing references to God, heaven and damnation, and a large number of instances where the Countess calls a male character "my dear" and "my darling." By now it was mid-January, and Universal planned to start shooting on the 23rd. The makers of *Dracula's Daughter* had the daunting task of completely re-plotting and writing the film in line with censorship requirements just before the now delayed shoot. In fact, rewrites continued almost all through the production period, sent daily, page by page, to the PCA for approval. The new script, which, the PCA granted, seemed "to meet the basic requirement of the Code"⁸⁰, had an entirely new plot. The Transylvanian setting, with its Gothic castle, Frankensteinian crowd scenes and epic perversion was ditched entirely, for a far more modest story set in contemporary London, and largely in the Countess' studio apartment, and which, apart from her death by arrow at the climax, contained no explicit gruesomeness at all. Still, the PCA cautioned Universal "with regard to the necessity for care in avoiding any unduly gruesome shots in your picture" – an intensification of their former policy.⁸¹

The Walking Dead underwent similar, extensive rewriting at the behest of the PCA. After viewing a treatment and meeting with the producer, Breen warned Warner to "exercise the utmost care" in toning down those potentially horrific aspects of the film "which are likely to give serious offense." He made two major stipulations. One was that "there be no suggestion in the transformation of the character of Dopey – after his death – that he is a half-man-half-animal." The other was that murders could not be shown onscreen, but "merely *suggested*" with no definite detail.⁸² *The Walking Dead*, like Warner's other horrors, added a contemporary, urban slant to its horror plot. Karloff's character,

executed for a crime he did not commit, is revived, pursues and revenges himself on the gangsters who framed him. The removal of explicit detail from both revival and the murders which make up the bulk of the action necessitated that the studio rewrite the story entirely.

Over the course of several rewrites, the PCA repeatedly asked for the script to be further toned down, concentrating their attention on the revival, the murders, and the appearance of Karloff's character, which must not "overdo the gruesomeness." The first two of these, the PCA continually stressed, were "to be handled entirely by suggestion," in a more ambitious and intensified reworking of the old strategy of partial suggestion which now kept most of the film's action off-screen.⁸³ The last horror film Warner had made, *Mystery of the Wax Museum*, back in the days of the SRC, had featured a mutilated villain, with a *Phantom*-esque unmasking scene, arson, copious violence, and the dipping of live people into molten wax. *The Walking Dead*, as filmed, contained no onscreen violence at all, a restrained 'creation scene' in which Karloff's Ellmann is revived, and monster make-up which restricted itself to a single white streak in the hair.

The Devil Doll, the last of the 1930s horror cycle, began its existence in the early months of 1935, as an adaptation of the 1934 novel *Burn Witch Burn* by A. Merritt intended firmly as a horror film. However, after lengthy and convoluted negotiations with the PCA at every stage of its making, it was finally released as a film marginal to the cycle, with studio marketing advising strongly against its promotion as a horror film. After a number of treatments, in September MGM forwarded their first draft scripts of a film to be titled *Witch of Timbuctoo*. The British censors, who had been apprised in advance by the PCA, vetoed this plot. The latter reported to the studio that "black magic associated with religious rites definitely prohibited" but informally agreed that "converting human beings to size of dolls is legitimate drama." The protagonist's suicide was also firmly ruled out by the PCA in the very first script draft, although it stubbornly remained in future scripts, to continual objections.⁸⁴ As I will elaborate, the film as released was marginal to the cycle, with the studio instructing cinemas *not* to promote it as a horror film.

The plot of *The Devil Doll*, like those of *The Walking Dead* and *Dracula's Daughter* before it, underwent substantial PCA-led changes, which continued into the production period, and even after shooting had ended. The fellow prisoner who gives the protagonist the secret of creating miniature humans, originally an African from a family of

witch doctors, became a mad scientist in later drafts. The setting was changed to Paris. Twenty-eight pages of retakes were shot by another director, Leon Gordon, including much of the dialogue. These also included a new ending, with the protagonist's suicide taken off-screen. His actual jump into the Seine is carefully elided by a dissolve, as he sways on the parapet, to "JUST A FEW FEET OF THE SWIFTLY-RUNNING DARK WATERS OF THE SEINE BELOW THE BRIDGE – but no sign of Lavond is visible." This, too, was unacceptable, and another re-shoot eliminated the suicide entirely, with Lavond now going into exile instead.⁸⁵ *The Devil Doll*, originally conceived as a horror film, was eventually marketed as a fantasy and novelty film, as I will show below. Contemporary reviews from the New York press noted that the dolls themselves, accompanied by a whimsical soundtrack of tinkling bells, were "cute" and "not likely to scare anyone but children."⁸⁶ However, despite these observations and the studio's attempt to promote the film otherwise, most reviews nevertheless generically located the film as horror: *Variety* noted that "through its basic 'idea,' the picture is in the horror category."⁸⁷

Unsurprisingly after such comprehensive alteration, all the final films of the cycle had relatively minor local censorship difficulties. *The Walking Dead* was approved by all the American state boards without cuts. It only experienced deletions in Quebec, which cut any discussion of violence, and Britain, which cut the scene before Ellmann's off-screen execution, and numerous close-ups of his face and of a glass Lindbergh heart during the revival scene. *The Devil Doll*, likewise, was approved everywhere but Quebec and Britain, both of which made only minor cuts. *Dracula's Daughter* was approved in most states; Maryland, Ohio, and Ontario all cut a single, sexually suggestive line, and the latter also excised the Countess' "frightening" of Lili.⁸⁸ The few, sporadic cuts made by the more stringent censor boards are all of material which in earlier horror films might have passed without comment among stronger stuff. It seems reasonable to speculate that such cuts as there were represented a board's strong general position on horror as much as any objection to the film itself.

However, the fact that the studios were listening to the PCA's warnings is evidenced by studios' increasing reluctance to promote horror as horror. The publicity manual for *The Devil Doll* persuaded exhibitors to advertise it rather as a novelty picture:

IT IS NOT A HORROR PICTURE. Do not sell it as a horror picture. It is not, in any

sense of the word. It is a thriller, a melodrama, a punch, sock, dynamic story that is real entertainment ... but most of all it has novelty ... and novelty nowadays means money at the box office.⁸⁹

Warner Bros., meanwhile, played up the contemporary thriller angle and de-emphasised horror in their promotion of *The Walking Dead*, reflecting the changes in the film which had taken place as a result of PCA intervention. Avoiding the word “horror”, the film’s marketing material instead refers to it as a “shiver drama” and a “shivery mystery drama”, and as with *The Devil Doll*, and much earlier with *Dracula*, resorts to promising (unspecified) novelty in place of extremes of horror. Two articles in the press book call *The Walking Dead* “one of the most novel and unique mystery drama ever to come to the screen”, and “one of the strangest mystery dramas ever screened”.⁹⁰ However, again reviews tended to challenge these attempts to shift generic reception of the film away from horror, acknowledging crime and mystery elements, but horror angles too. The *New York Morning Telegraph* said that “it manages to combine both the horror type of film with the common, or garden variety of gangster film”, while the *New York Times* stated that “horror films are a staple commodity, and this one was taken from one of the better shelves”.⁹¹

The PCA’s requests had, the year before, meant that *Bride of Frankenstein* and *Werewolf of London* had to shoot extra footage once the picture was finished, the former to fill in run-time, and the latter to add a ‘moral’ prologue. The shooting of *Dracula’s Daughter* and *The Devil Doll* was delayed and inconvenienced by the central narrative changes which the PCA requested. Moreover, by forcing such substantial remodelling of the plot, the PCA were sending the message that the affect of horror was in itself an unacceptable element which had to be eliminated.

The PCA achieved a two year hiatus in the production of horror films, from mid-1936 to late 1938. After this, *Son of Frankenstein* (Universal, 1939, dir. Rowland V. Lee) went into production at Universal, and a new fashion for horror films meant that the hiatus in production collapsed. However, important changes both in broader censorship practices and in generic uses of horror meant that 1940s horror did not retread the path of the 1930s cycle but that, as we will see, that the PCA had to renegotiate their censorship model of horror once more.

Chapter Five: "Less Phantom and More Opera": transformations of horror and its censorship, 1938-1943

Horror films were out of production for only two and a half years. By the end of 1938, a highly successful revival of *Dracula* and *Frankenstein* as a double bill had prompted studios to reconsider horror and to put new films into production, despite the PCA's severe warnings and open hostility. These re-emergent horror films did not constitute a coherent new cycle, however, but a number of distinct cycles, most of which blended horror with other genres.

The purpose of this chapter is partly to examine the ending and transformation of the 1930s horror cycle's fraught relationship with controversy and censorship. I examine how the PCA maintained the horror hiatus for two years, the terms on which the 'ban' collapsed and horror production resumed, and how the PCA renegotiated their horror censorship policy with studios once more. The PCA's pre-eminent position as a site of US film censorship by 1939, and the deflation of the morally conservative 1930s cinema censorship campaign meant that horror was much less important as a censorship issue now. The PCA's relaxation of their horror censorship policy caused them to return to the notion of reducing visual gruesomeness, but now sometimes aimed also to influence films towards placing more emphasis on other generic elements.

The attention horror historians and scholars have so far given the 1940s has tended to be limited in several important ways. Firstly, (as I argue in 5.1 and 5.2), they tend to neglect the two-year hiatus in horror production between 1936 and 1938, and most of the horror films produced between 1939 and 1941, in favour of a concentration upon Universal's horror unit productions from *The Wolf Man* and *Ghost of Frankenstein* onwards, and upon RKO's competing horror unit and its films, starting with *Cat People* (1942).

David J. Skal, after commenting upon the supposed British horror ban, largely ignores the two year hiatus of 1936-1938 in order to assert that the 1930s horror cycle ended with *Son of Frankenstein*, due to the stylistic and thematic similarities he sees between it and 1930s horror. He then skips over horror production between 1939 and 1941 in order to begin his narrative of what he calls the second horror cycle

with the release of *The Wolf Man* in late 1941.¹ Andrew Tudor's narrative also elides this period, going straight from "Phase I: the Classic Period (1931-1936)" to "Phase II: the War Period (1941-1946)".² This said, Tudor logically justifies this choice within the bounds of his study, as forming part of an examination of statistic booms in horror production, rather than a complete history.

This choice of focus has several consequences. Firstly, it leads scholars and historians to neglect the diversity of horror films produced in this period. Films like *Hound of the Baskervilles* (Universal, 1939), *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (RKO, 1939), *The Man They Could Not Hang* (Columbia, 1939), *The Gorilla* (Fox, 1939) and *Phantom of the Opera* (Universal, 1943) are rarely accorded attention. This is perhaps partly because each of these films, and many like them, combined horror with other genre offerings, so might be dismissed by critics who define horror more narrowly or who tend to reject generic multiplicity. However, as I discuss in 5.3, horror remained an important selling point for such films.

A related problem is that many studies taking in this period see it merely as a declined version of the 1930s horror cycle. In a typical account, Andrew Tudor claims that the genre in these years was "dominated by the cheap quickie" and that the period simply "extends the patterns already established in the thirties, in some cases to desperate limits" and with what he sees as an inferior and cheap "straightforwardly naturalistic" style substituted for the distinctive use of light and shade" of the 1930s.³ After recounting the "absurd" plot of *House of Frankenstein* (1946), he summarises:

House of Frankenstein is symptomatic of the period's lack of invention. Both invention and finance had flagged, and many forties horror movies were undoubtedly seen by audiences as second-rate programme-fillers. This was not a period of genre innovation...⁴

As well as neglecting the variety of horror films being produced during the period, this analysis ignores the fact that Universal's horror unit, the chief target of accounts like Tudor's, was in fact extremely financially successful. The notion that Universal's horror unit style was a deliberate and successful strategy to pursue the horror fan market rather than a loss of talent and originality is supported by the distinction the studio made between horror unit films and its big-budget 'A' picture horror films, such as *Phantom of the Opera*. As prestige pictures, these attempt to court non-horror consumers too, and therefore display different stylistic traits and add other genre elements.

A variation of this argument for a 'declined' 1940s horror cycle applies it solely to Universal's output, and thereby uses Universal's supposedly inferior films to valorise Val Lewton's RKO horror unit productions in comparison. For instance, Edmund Bansak, in *Fearing the Dark: the Val Lewton Career*:

... Universal's March release, *Frankenstein Meets the Wolf Man*, had already done much to cheapen the name of the genre. While Lewton and his cohorts were trying to keep their monsters in the dark, Universal had upped the ante by including two monsters for the price of one ... Universal may have taken some of the respectability away from the horror trade, but the success of *Cat People* attracted a new legion of fans. While Universal's early-1940s films had begun to pander to the juvenile trade, *Cat People* and *I Walked With a Zombie* drew adult audiences.⁵

However, as I shall argue in 5.3, RKO's unit was set up to imitate and compete with Universal's very successful horror unit, and its contrasting house style was not the result of superior craftsmanship so much as product differentiation.

In this chapter, I would like to advance the case for a more thorough examination of 1940s horror in general, and of the period from 1939 to 1941 in particular. While this period might have produced a smaller number of horror films than later in the 1940s, I would like to argue that it saw not just the end of the hiatus but a concomitant generic transformation of horror, a reinvigoration that saw a trend towards large numbers of films, some of them perhaps not classified as horror by Tudor's study and others, which blended horror with other genres.

5.1. How did the horror 'ban' operate, and how did horror production resume?-

Existing studies of 1930s and 1940s horror, as I mentioned last chapter, tend to devote relatively little space to the cycle's end. As I argued above, the two year horror production hiatus which spanned from mid-1936 to late 1938 is even less explored. In this section I examine several attempts to put horror films into production during the hiatus, the PCA's role in maintaining it, and the terms on which it ended in autumn 1938 and horror productions resumed.

The PCA, after its first few years, was a stabler and more assured institution. Maltby notes that by 1939, their work was completely integrated into Hollywood film production and most censorship took place through them, through negotiation with

studios before release rather than through local cutting, protests and bans afterwards.⁶ This had been one major aim of the MPPDA in instituting the Production Code in 1930. Its achievement co-incided with a general deflation of the domestic cinema/censorship debate in the morally conservative form it had existed for much of the 1930s. As I mentioned in my Introduction, by 1939, the pre-eminent issue in censorship debate was, by contrast, the *limits* which might be set to the Production Code and the PCA's jurisdiction, particularly in regard to the PCA's obstruction of several explicitly anti-Fascist films, and the general representation of overtly political content connected with the growing international crisis which would become the Second World War.⁷

In the autumn of 1938, Universal put another big budget *Frankenstein* sequel, *Son of Frankenstein*, on to its production schedule. The most immediate reason for this is agreed by most critics, including Skal and Brunas, to be a phenomenally popular autumn 1938 theatrical reissue of *Dracula* and *Frankenstein* as a double bill.⁸ These revivals, discouraged but not condemned by the PCA, as well as prompting Universal's new management to put *Son of Frankenstein* into pre-production, apparently reawakened the interests of other studios in horror and horror-inflected films. The reissue appeared to offer evidence of continued high public demand for horror. Brunas *et al's* *Universal Horrors*, one of the only histories which treat the 1936-1938 hiatus and the films of 1939-1941 in any detail, argues that despite horror's censorship difficulties, ultimately all it took to change studios' minds was a great enough promise of major box office success.⁹

I argued in the last chapter that the British horror ban never existed as such; but that the rumours of its existence were a powerful deterrent, especially as the PCA, in their role as interpreters to the studios of international censorship difficulties, leveraged them strategically to help persuade studios of the inadvisability of horror films. In this section I wish to follow up this argument by examining several earlier abortive studio attempts to put horror films into production during the hiatus. The PCA's records show that in each of these cases they successfully dissuaded the studio from continuing by citing horror's international censorship difficulties. After the *Dracula/Frankenstein* revival, though, each of these films was put back into production. The PCA's role was, as I discussed last chapter, basically advisory at all points before they viewed a completed film.

As Brunas *et al* suggest, the promise of more imminent major box-office hits in the manner of *Dracula*, *Frankenstein*, *The Invisible Man* and *Bride of Frankenstein*, and even of more modest money-spinning from lower budget horror films, seems to have been all it took for the studios to ignore the PCA. However, I am aware of no extant study which examines the *resolution* of the censorship dispute which, as I argued last chapter, appears to have been primarily responsible for the cessation of horror production in 1936. I aim in this chapter to offer such an examination.

By 1937, an amendment to the Code removed any remaining ambiguity over the position of the Production Code itself concerning horror:

Brutality, horror and gruesomeness

Scenes of excessive brutality and gruesomeness must be cut to an absolute minimum. Where such scenes, in the judgment of the Production Code Administration, are likely to prove seriously offensive, they will not be approved.¹⁰

Joseph Breen's secretary Olga Martin, in the copy of the Code published in a contemporary book on the subject, *Hollywood's Movie Commandments*, adds a note to the amendments which clarifies the position of the PCA: "Rulings made by the Production Code Administration in the course of its work automatically become amendments to the Code." This amendment therefore, although it did not prohibit horror films as such, gave the PCA more leverage in placing what they might term excessive gruesomeness in *direct* rather than indirect contravention of the Production Code.

Studio attempts to put horror films into production soon after being initially put off by censorship difficulties are understandable, given that, as I discussed in my last chapter, as of 1936 the trade appeared to see the market for such films continuing to be stable, and box office to be steady. In 1937, the PCA's archives appear to show no attempts by any studio to put a horror film into production, but in March 1938, Universal made enquiry informally to the PCA about the Code certificate prospects of a sequel to *The Invisible Man*. They claimed it would be played not for gruesomeness but for comedy, as they put it, in the manner of the ghost-themed comedy, *Topper* (MGM, 1937, dir. Norman Z. McLeod). This move appears to have been made in order to circumvent disapproval, and perhaps also to build on *The Invisible Man*'s successful addition of comedy elements to horror, which I discussed in my Introduction. The studio received a carefully-worded warning in response:

... please let me say that it is our understanding that it is your purpose not to make a, so-called, "horror picture", or to deal with subjects which are forbidden under the Code as excessively brutal or gruesome. It is our understanding, also that it is your purpose to play the story for broad comedy and with trick photography. ... If our understanding in this is correct, it is our thought that there can be no reasonable objection to this picture.¹¹

The message – that horror films and horror content were completely unacceptable – was clear. If Universal had been hoping to sneak any "gruesomeness" in around the comedy, they abandoned the idea now. The story was shelved for over a year, and a full treatment was not sent to the PCA until June 1939, six months after the release of *Son of Frankenstein*. By that point, perhaps emboldened or encouraged by *Son's* profitability, *The Invisible Man Returns* was more clearly a horror film once more, the elements of comedy were de-emphasised, and the treatment received numerous PCA cautions on gruesomeness, revenge, blood, and strangulation scenes.¹²

Columbia, in September 1938, also began developing a horror film, *The Man They Could Not Hang* (Columbia, 1939, dir. Nick Grinde). Columbia's treatment for *The Man They Could Not Hang* was met by the PCA with as firm a line as *The Invisible Man* sequel. The PCA informed the studio flatly that the story was "not acceptable under the provisions of the Production Code" because of "the excessive number of gruesome and brutal killings." They added their now customary statement that the "political censorship" difficulties of such a film could be gauged by the fact that British censors were likely to reject it "as falling into the horror category." Such warnings, which, as I outlined last chapter, misrepresented actual British censorship practices, remained the PCA's most prominent line of argument concerning horror.

After a conference, Columbia agreed to develop the film "as a murder mystery rather than a horror story," with gruesomeness minimised and killings left largely off-screen. In addition, the narrative's mad scientist would be recast as a "sincere scientist" and that it would be "clearly indicated that he is not insane" – a significant detail of narrative framing which I will discuss in more detail below. When the PCA saw the rewritten script, though, they judged that while its gruesomeness was no longer excessive enough to contravene the Code, they still believed that the British censors would reject it. They further appended a list of seven unacceptably gruesome scenes in the script, all of them germane to the plot, and further noted that the BBFC would likely disapprove "the suggestion in the latter part of the story that Dr. Savaard is insane." Columbia responded, like Universal, by putting the film's development on

hold, returning it to it only in May 1939, months after the release and success of *Son of Frankenstein*.¹³

Whether deliberately or inadvertently, the autumn 1938 *Dracula/Frankenstein* revival functioned as an inexpensive test-case for releasing horror films under the current censorship climate, testing both the limits of the PCA's firm anti-horror stance and the veracity of some of their warnings regarding local censorship. Indeed, since, as we have seen, Universal had contemplated new horror films, and been warned away, at least once since the end of the cycle, it is possible that the reissue may even have been intended to test the water over local and PCA censorship conditions, as well as determine if horror still had mass box-office appeal.

Like all films released before the formation of the PCA in 1934, *Dracula* and *Frankenstein* had to be issued with new Code certificates before any new cinema release. Considering the PCA's hard line on new horror films, it is surprising how leniently they now dealt with the founding fathers of Universal's horror line. The PCA noted that "under the Code, as now administered" *Dracula*, due to the "growing volume of protest against the so-called "horror" pictures", would require "careful watching and careful cutting." However, they ordered only minimal deletions to avoid "excessive gruesomeness" and "tone down aspects of this film which might otherwise add to your difficulties."¹⁴ In fact, only Renfield's and Dracula's dying screams were deleted from the soundtrack, and nothing at all from the film itself – although the PCA recommended that Universal cut the epilogue's final comment "after all, there are such things."

Frankenstein's deletions were likewise few, but more significant than *Dracula's*; and since the cut 1937 print became the standard edition for decades, they have become notorious. Frankenstein's ecstatic blasphemy in the creation scene ("In the name of God! Now I know what it feels like to be God!") was cut off after "In the name of ...", resulting in a famous jump-cut. A shot of Dr. Waldman's hypodermic was cut, and the scene where Fritz taunts the Monster substantially shortened. Most significantly of all, the PCA ordered the death of Maria, the girl the Monster accidentally drowns, cut entirely. This oddly results in precisely the kind of menacing elision that, as I discussed in Chapters Three and Four, the horror cycle itself used strategically to elicit audience reactions: while the scene shows that the girl's death is a confused accident and that the Monster attempts to rescue her, the edited version, cutting from

the Monster looming over the girl to her father carrying her drowned corpse through the streets, clearly implies murder.

Overall, though, the PCA's cutting of the reissued films shows a much more relaxed attitude than that they displayed to the horror films of 1935 and 1936. It may well be that, with horror out of production for two years, studios easily discouraged from pursuing proposed horror films, and no apparent prospect of any new cycle, they felt it unnecessary to take a firmer line on these seven-year old films.

However, the *Dracula* and *Frankenstein* double-bill surprised many, including its exhibitors, with its vast, sell-out popularity. Largely shown at smaller theatres, it mostly outperformed their first-run films and had many of them filled to capacity and running extra or even continuous screenings. In Cincinnati, the revival was the "surprise pull of the week", "racking up a six-year high mark" for the cinema showing it, and in Indianapolis, it was a "marvellous shot in the arm" for the small Apollo theatre. In Chicago, the revival's box office business at the small Garrick Theatre was limited only by "seating capacity and turnover." The revivals created a great demand for more horror films in many cities. *Variety's* Chicago reporter described horror as "an epidemic that has taken hold on exhibitors and public alike," and in Detroit a reissue of *King Kong* and the British Karloff-Thesiger film *The Ghoul* was put out in a rival theatre to compete with the second week of the "smash" Universal horror double-bill.¹⁵

The massive success of the *Dracula/Frankenstein* revival prompted Universal to begin work on a second big budget *Frankenstein* sequel, *Son of Frankenstein*. This film raised the same range of censorship issues for the PCA as the earlier horror cycle, but by the time it reached the cinemas to excellent box office success, several other studios were putting horror and horror-inflected films into production.

Unsurprisingly, the PCA tried very hard to dissuade Universal from reviving the horror cycle with *Son of Frankenstein*, and to discourage the other studios which, sensing a trend, were also contemplating the production of horror films. Following their established practise, much of this pressure focused on the potential banning of the film in the United Kingdom. On receiving the initial script for *Son*, Breen telephoned and wrote to Universal warning them to contact the BBFC regarding the film's possible "H" classification. However, the PCA also got in touch with the BBFC

independently. Breen cabled the British Board of Film Classification, asking them "WOULD YOU BE DISPOSED TO APPROVE HORRIFIC PICTURE LIKE FRANKENSTEIN."

The reply was resolutely negative, although of course it only stated the BBFC's broad disapproval, rather than any statement of intention to ban new horror films:

FILM CREATED CONSIDERABLE PUBLIC OUTCRY AND PARTLY INSTRUMENTAL IN BRINGING INTO EXISTENCE HORRIFIC CATEGORY STOP FILM WOULD TODAY UNQUESTIONABLY COME WITHIN THIS CATEGORY STOP WE USE EVERY ENDEAVOUR TO PREVENT SUCH PRODUCTIONS.¹⁶

The PCA forwarded this response to Universal, as well as to Columbia (who had earlier in the year considered *The Man They Could Not Hang*), dryly commenting to Universal that "the above may be of some importance and value to you in the consideration of your plans to produce a "horror" picture."¹⁷ This time, however, the PCA's established strategy of non-specific warnings about British censorship policy did not work: *Son of Frankenstein* had already gone into production.¹⁸

Breen's next response was to forward the studio his weighty correspondence with Katherine J. Vandervoort, a schools administrator in Westchester, NY who had lobbied the PCA against the *Dracula/Frankenstein* revival. Vandervoort sent the PCA copies of her existing letter to Carl E. Milliken of the MPPDA's New York The PCA also forwarded this correspondence to several other studios considering horror productions, hoping it would provide useful evidence to persuade studios that new horror films would be more trouble than they were worth.¹⁹

The specifics of Vandervoort's complaints are very much in line with the social effects reasoning regarding horror which *Our Movie Made Children* had helped to establish earlier in the decade. She begins with an anecdote about finding a confused, "incoherent" and "hysterical" nine year old boy, Don, running up the street "looking wildly up into the faces of pedestrians". On questioning him, she discovered that he "had been inveigled into going to the [*Dracula/Frankenstein*] show by a thirteen year old boy in the neighborhood" but had left the theatre after becoming frightened.²⁰ This anecdote, and Vandervoort's subsequent discussion, alludes to key concerns of the 1930s cinema/censorship debate. She recounts how attending the *Dracula/Frankenstein* double-bill has induced obsessive enthusiasm, sleeplessness and nightmares in groups of children she surveyed in a local elementary school, "droves" of whom she had seen attending the film:

Some of them were wide-eyed with excitement and wanted to tell the whole story in detail. Others appeared more anxious not to talk about it and one little blonde girl ... said to me, "He's got to stop talking about it – he's been talking about it all day." ... A little girl in a third grade said that she had seen these same two picture in New York City about two weeks ago and that she has cried at night ever since. Many other children said that they couldn't go to sleep when they got home. One little boy remarked with sparkling eyes, "Ohboy, this ain't nothing! Wait till the 'Witches Tale' comes. That's going to be just full of murders."²¹

In the Don anecdote in particular, horror film attendance is framed as a disreputable leisure activity towards which an older boy, a bad influence, tempts a younger. There is a strong resemblance in the tenor of the tale to Forman's anecdotes in *Our Movie Made Children*, which I discussed in Chapter Four, about young spectators hallucinating moving sidewalks and supposedly exhibiting other hysterical or even psychotic symptoms after watching horror films. Similarly, the elementary schoolchildren she discusses are both compulsively drawn to horror and inevitably damaged by it.

In her correspondence, Vandervoort displays an astute awareness of the MPPDA's concerns, and the critical effect of censorship campaigning on the industry in the early thirties. She alludes to the theatre in question's practice of block booking, and carefully hints of the dangers a new, broad-based anti-cinema campaign could present to the industry, noting local groups who are "anxious to do some active work in the motion picture field". She forwards a 1936 letter written to the Judge of the Westchester County Children's Court regarding proposed state-wide legislation to regulate motion picture showings. She had opposed this initiative at the time but remarks that "there must be something done by the public if you who are in charge of this enormous force for good or evil do not take the initiative" – and she refers with careful understatement to the broad base of support she has already amassed.²²

Breen's response to Vandervoort attempts to persuade her that the PCA shares her concerns, and suggests that he took the threats she carefully proffered of a new and damaging horror controversy quite seriously. It also lays out some of the PCA's stance upon horror following Universal's decision to produce *Son of Frankenstein* – Breen explains that "a number of our studio folks hereabouts ... have been discussing with us, in recent weeks, some plans for producing some of these, so-called, "horror" pictures. Breen notes the recent hiatus in horror film production, although he exaggerates it somewhat, claiming 1935's *Bride of Frankenstein* was the last Hollywood horror film to be made. However, he acknowledges that "there seems

to be a very substantial market for these films, both in this country and abroad". Finally, he tentatively assures Vandervoort, of Universal's forthcoming *Frankenstein* sequel: "this, I think, is much less horrifying than either of the two pictures exhibited in your local theater."²³

Although Breen's claims that *Son of Frankenstein* would be less horrifying than its predecessors seem to imply changes achieved during censorship negotiations, the PCA's attention to *Son of Frankenstein* was largely focused on dissuading them from horror itself, rather than on specific details in the script. They did, however ask for one batch of changes to the first draft, covering various non-blasphemous religious references, one potentially blasphemous reference to Frankenstein Sr.'s discovery of "the secret that God is so jealous of" – and various examples of gruesomeness. Universal, perhaps treading carefully, complied with all the PCA's requests, including excising shots of skeletons and corpses and substantially changing the film's climax, which originally involved the Monster attempting to operate on Frankenstein's son.²⁴

The PCA argued again that *Son* was much milder in content than the previous two *Frankenstein* films to the New York Board of Censors, in a letter designed to pre-empt "complaints about it from those, who did not go to see the picture." While it was the PCA's job to defend films after release, the way they chose to justify *Son* is rather informative.

While the present picture follows the "Frankenstein story", it is a vast improvement on its numerous predecessors. For one thing: it is less shocking – less "horrific", as our British friends have it – and it is infinitely better made ... The story, too, is a better constructed story, and the dialogue much above the "Frankenstein level".

Of course, the Frankenstein stories have called forth considerable protest in the past. But the present story will not, I feel, be subjected to much unfavourable criticism. In fact, with those who see it, there is likely to be considerable disappointment, because it is not the "shocker" that its predecessors were.²⁵

While the previous two *Frankenstein* films had also been expensive prestige pictures from one of the studio's best-regarded directors, the appeal to quality here is an invocation of the Production Code-influenced line of argument, which I discussed at the start of Chapter Three, that well-made films are tasteful, and objectionable films poorly-made.

As with the PCA's attitude to the final horror films of the 1930s cycle, their stance on *Son of Frankenstein* was manifestly more an attempt to emphasise their firm policy on horror as such than a reaction to the strength of the gruesome elements within the

film itself. However, they may well have grounded their assertion that *Son of Frankenstein* was less horrifying than its predecessors on an observation of the film itself. *Son* contains far fewer murders or scenes of torture, and no graverobbing or monster-making. *Son's* first act of violence occurs sixty-one minutes in, and it does not revive the Monster until forty-five minutes in. Violence and bodily gruesomeness is also far less explicit in the murders and the "creation scene" in *Son*. However, as I will explore in more detail in section 5.3, with reference to contemporary reviews of *Son*, these changes can also be explained as attempts by the film's producers to make the action of the film more believable and thereby, *more* engaging and emotionally effective.

Son of Frankenstein was subject to a few cuts by local censorship boards, but did not experience anything like the censorship difficulties of the previous two *Frankenstein* films. Ohio made cuts to two scenes; Ontario, Kansas and British Columbia all made cuts in one scene each. All these cuts were from the same two scenes, both dealing with the Monster's murders. The most commonly cut sequence was the moment when the Monster, having just murdered a local peasant, Herr Neumüller, on Igor's orders, places his body by the wheels of his cart so that the horses will run over it, making his death look accidental.²⁶

Son of Frankenstein enjoyed predictably excellent box office success. Its Broadway performance was "lively" although not quite spectacular, but in many cities it performed outstandingly. A Universal advertisement in *Variety* boasted of holdovers (two week runs, the sign of a hit film) in eight cities including Los Angeles (in two separate cinemas), Boston, Washington and Cleveland.²⁷

Son's success was enough to confirm the industry trend; by the end of the year, there were more horror and horror-inflected films in production than ever. *Look* magazine reported that studios "have started a race to produce blood chillers on a more lavish and fantastic scale than they have ever attempted before. ... 'Nightmares for everybody' is the Hollywood slogan for a more horrible 1939."²⁸

We can therefore posit two possible reasons for the relaxation of the controversy around horror, and the increased tolerance shown both by the PCA and by local censorship boards. We could attribute horror's improved situation to broader changes taking place in the censorship debate, and the PCA's more assured position. Conversely, we could argue for the PCA's own claim in reference to *Son of*

Frankenstein, discussed in section 5.1 that the changes they achieved in horror content made horror films from 1939 onwards “less horrifying” than their predecessors.²⁹

I argued earlier in this section that a comparison of *Son of Frankenstein* with *Frankenstein* and *Bride of Frankenstein* does show significant changes, especially in the quantity of visual gruesomeness, in the style of filming, and in the use of tempo and pacing. However, as I suggested then, this does not necessarily lead to the conclusion that *Son of Frankenstein* is a “less horrifying” film. Matt Hills has convincingly argued in *The Pleasures of Horror* that in general the assertion that the more explicit and spectacular aspects of horror films are the most effective at eliciting affect response is usually based upon an assumption about how horror spectatorship ‘works’, which prioritises monstrosity and acts of transgression over “objectless states of anxiety”, anticipation, mood, suspense and atmosphere.³⁰ Many reviews from this period actively assert that the latter elicit intense affective responses from audiences. *Film Daily’s* review of *Son of Frankenstein* claims that “the entire atmosphere, especially the scenes in the gloomy castle, will bring delicious creeps down the spines of all the thrill addicts.”³¹ Likewise, another trade review of Universal’s new horror version of *Hound of the Baskervilles* noted positively that “chiller mood generated by the characters and the story is heightened by effects secured from sequences in the medieval castle and the dreaded fog-bound moors.”³²

The tenor of positive trade reviews of horror films also contests in a more general sense the idea that horror films from this period were less controversial because they were less effective. *Hollywood Reporter* commented on *Man Made Monster*:

“Man Made Monster” is a notable example of how [horror films] should be made. ... each plot brick laid neatly on top of another to build a climax of terrifying intensity. Theatre janitors should be sweeping up fingernails several days after its runs have ended. Even the critics in the projection room Friday were squirming ...³³

Similarly, *Variety* said of *The Invisible Man Returns*:

Patrons of those situations that have cashed in heavily on the Frankenstein and others of Universal’s so-called ‘horror’ talkers will be standing in line as soon as the word-of-mouth plugs get started ... one cannot accuse ‘Returns’ authors of overlooking any bets in the shock line. Exhibs should keep handy a supply of restoratives for faint-hearted souls who find this brand of entertainment more than they can take.³⁴

To return to the issue of *Son of Frankenstein's* change of pace and style, and how this might relate to its effectiveness to audiences as horror, some contemporary reviews also local these changes as an attempt to make the film *more* effective, battle any over-familiarity in the story now being told for the third time, and the potentially jaded responses this might breed. Many of *Son's* changes of style and content could be argued to be oriented towards this end: for instance, making the events of the plot more plausibly located within the experience of mundane, modern American protagonists, giving a slow build-up to the introduction of fantastic elements to introduce the audience to these characters and aid in suspension of disbelief, and filming a more 'realistic' and low-key creation scene, and giving Rathbone's Wolf Frankenstein a speech which offers a more 'rational' pseudo-scientific explanation of the technology behind the Monster's creation. *Film Daily's* review of *Son of Frankenstein* suggests that *Son* is both "real horror" and better, more convincing than the films which preceded it:

A real horror production that will give all the thrill fans a treat. It is a far better constructed play than the first "Frankenstein" ... the story builds to fine suspense, and the horror scenes have been handled expertly.³⁵

Moreover, the PCA's suggestion to Katherine Vandervoort that a decrease in visual gruesomeness leads to a decrease in affective intensity does not quite tally with their censorship policy of 1935-1936, which seemed to be based upon the notion that certain ideas, themes and suggestions effectively produced affective horror themselves, rather than eliciting the latter purely through their relay in a visually gruesome style. For instance, as I discussed in Chapter Four, the PCA's line on shadow-play and removal of themes and plot elements they identify as horror from *Dracula's Daughter*, *The Walking Dead* and especially *The Devil Doll* seems to strongly indicate such a belief. Therefore I would argue that, especially in Vandervoort's formulation, horror films which were commercially successful on the strength of a horror campaign, and praised by reviews for their affective intensity, are in this displaying evidence that many cinemagoers and critics judged that they had precisely the qualities anti-horror critics found to be problematic. In other words, the PCA's claims of mildness may be valid regarding visual gruesomeness, but are less convincing in the face of trade and box office evidence that many found them very effective horror.

This seems to me to suggest that, although during this thesis I have striven for a microhistorical approach to examining horror censorship, the changes in horror's

copyright position from 1939 to 1942, were in large part driven by wider changes at work in film censorship. As I argued earlier, PCA negotiation was now thoroughly integrated with production practices. As I argued earlier, the wider censorship debate had moved on to disputes over censorship of political content in film, particularly related to fascism, socialism and the escalating pre-war international crisis. These debates, as I mentioned, focused on the limits of PCA power, rather than its effectiveness. Horror was no longer a 'hot potato' or a place where most censorship campaigners, Vandervoort apart, directed their energy. In fact, it appears Vandervoort's concerns are those of the earlier 1930s and do not represent the groundswell of barely contained protest she claims. These broader changes can account for horror's decreased local censorship difficulties and the PCA's gradual dropping of warnings about British censorship.

5.2 The renegotiation of horror's relationship with censorship, 1939-1940

Examination of PCA negotiations and local censorship reports for a sample of horror films from 1939 to 1941 shows several important trends in horror films' censorship position. First, the PCA's dire warnings over British opposition to horror decreased in strength and in frequency of use. Second, PCA negotiations show a pattern which differs substantially from their strict horror policy of 1935-1936. Thirdly, horror films tended to have much fewer difficulties with local censorship than they had during the 1931-1936 period. Below I will examine each of these trends in more detail, and then attempt to posit some explanations of why they might have occurred and what important changes they appear to indicate in discourses about horror censorship.

In 1938-39, the PCA initially attempted to discourage the new horror production trend through repeating its standard warnings about British censorship. The producers of *The Invisible Man Returns*, *The Man They Could Not Hang*, and *The Return of Doctor X* (Warner, 1939, dir. Vincent Sherman) were all, on submitting initial treatments or scripts, given similarly worded warnings, along with advice that they consult their foreign departments upon the subject:

You will have in mind the extremely critical attitude of the British Censor Board and their statement that they do not approve pictures falling into the "horrific" category for exhibition in England.³⁶

All these warning statements stressed that if the BBFC judged that a film was horror, it would be “rejected in toto”, rather than approved with an ‘H’ certificate. As I have argued in Chapter Four and earlier in this chapter, such statements were inaccurate, and even misrepresented by exaggeration the BBFC’s own correspondence with the PCA.

As a strategic attempt to dissuade the studios concerned from horror production in the midst of the new horror trend of 1939-1940, however, these warnings were ineffective. Perhaps partly for this reason, the PCA began to rely more on an alternative strategy: cautioning studios about excessively gruesome angles on the strength of the 1937 Code amendment cited earlier this chapter, and asking for horror angles to be minimized. PCA correspondence over a number of horror films from between 1938 and 1940 shows that while warnings regarding the British horror ‘ban’ do not decrease in severity during this period, they do noticeably decrease in frequency of use.

In September and October 1938, the PCA warned Columbia about the British censorship situation regarding *The Man They Could Not Hang*, and reminded them once further. In May 1939, they cautioned Warner regarding British censorship over *The Return of Doctor X*, and between June and October that year they warned Universal four times over *The Invisible Man Returns*. From this point the PCA’s reliance on these warnings decreased. PCA correspondence over *Tower of London*, in July and August 1939, do not mention British censorship but instead relay their substantial concern about excessive gruesomeness. The last use of warnings about British censorship I have been able to find dates from May 1940, in the PCA’s response to a draft script submitted for Universal’s *The Mummy’s Hand*. PCA correspondence after this tends consistently to express concern via cautions for excessive gruesomeness instead.³⁷

If we accept that the British warning was intended to dissuade studios from horror films and horror angles, then it makes sense that the PCA would abandon it for other tactics once it was clear that studios were proceeding with horror production regardless, and the trend continued through several waves of production. A secondary reason for their abandonment of this line of reasoning might have been that in 1939 the British film industry also got in on the new horror trend, producing the Lugosi-starring *Dark Eyes of London* (Great Britain, 1939, dir. Walter Summers). This was released under the title *The Human Monster* and marketed as horror film in the

USA. *Variety*'s review had the prominent sub-title "BRITISH-MADE" and noted that it was "not only reminiscent of 'Frankenstein', but [contained] numerous horror scenes no longer permitted under the Haysian code".³⁸ The wide readership of *Variety* within the trade would have made it a little more difficult, after this, for the PCA to suggest to studios that horror was effectively banned in Britain.

The PCA's negotiating strategy for the horror films of 1938-40 was to issue their strongest warnings from the start, and in correspondence thereafter ask for smaller, specific changes. According to Richard Maltby, such a strategy is characteristic of their negotiation in general. He claims that Breen "often chose to express himself as forcefully as possible in the first instance when he thought that proceeding with a script would be inadvisable."³⁹ However, their negotiations nevertheless show a substantial change from the way they censored horror films in 1935-36. As I discussed in my last chapter, during this period they asked for increasingly substantial and fundamental changes to plots and to important visual components. Therefore *The Walking Dead*, a crime-horror, was asked to eliminate overtones of gangsterism and visual gruesomeness, *Dracula's Daughter*, a vampire film, was requested to eliminate unsavoury combinations of sex and horror, and *Werewolf of London* was asked to eliminate all transformation sequences and werewolf make-up (but did not comply). As I have argued, the PCA in their negotiations on both *The Devil Doll* and *The Walking Dead* favoured playing up other genre angles and de-emphasising horror, to the degree that *The Devil Doll*, originally conceived as the horror film *The Witch of Timbuctoo* was marketed by MGM as a novelty special-effects film instead, although reviews frequently relocated it as a horror film, as I discussed in Chapter Four.⁴⁰

During the 1938 to 1940 period, the PCA's use of warnings and requests regarding excessive gruesomeness shows a development both from the eliminations of visual and aural instances that had characterised their earlier 1930s policy, and from their stricter, zero-tolerance policy on horror content from 1935 to 1936. As we have seen, the PCA's power was always more in aggressive negotiation than in laying down absolute edicts and bans. Its arrest of the horror cycle depended on broad industry co-operation. When the *Dracula/Frankenstein* revival prompted studios to jump back on the horror bandwagon, the PCA were prepared, it seems, to settle for the substantial generic changes which radically reduced visual and aural gruesomeness, rather than, as they had in 1935-1936, to aim squarely at any elements that might elicit responses of affective horror.

They tended instead to cite excessive gruesomeness and ask for deletions and for “horror angles to be minimized” on these grounds. This strategy depends upon the belief that a large proportion of horror films will be marketed for multiple genre angles which can be played up or down, a trend which I will discuss in much more detail in the next section of this chapter. The PCA often actively requested that films be shifted away from horror angles and towards content which they felt would associate them with other, less problematic genres.

In a representative early example, the PCA approved the development of *The Man They Could Not Hang* after its initial rejection on several conditions, one of which was that “every effort will be made to avoid any excessive gruesomeness ... only suggest a majority of the killings.” At a story conference in October 1938 which followed the rejection of *The Man They Could Not Hang*’s original treatment, one of the defences and assurances used by the producers to get the PCA to approve further development was that it was their purpose in further development “to write a murder mystery rather than a horror story.”⁴¹ Another condition was that the character “Dr. Steiner is to be characterized as a sincere scientist, and it will be clearly indicated that he is not insane.”⁴² Policies barring explicit insanity and blasphemy were both used to alter depictions of mad or transgressive scientists. In the event, as I will argue in the next section, *The Man They Could Not Hang*, a Karloff vehicle, was promoted and reviewed as *combining* mystery and horror angles rather than substituting the former for the latter.

Similarly, *The Return of Doctor X*, underwent substantial negotiations over gruesomeness after the studio submitted an initial treatment which declared that “even Dracula and Dr. Frankenstein could see it and get a thrill.”⁴³ The PCA responded to this by trying to get the studio to alter the film’s content:

It will be necessary for you to exercise the greatest possible care in shooting a number of the scenes, set forth in this material, in order to avoid their becoming too realistically gruesome. This is important. Any excessive gruesomeness or brutality will necessitate our withholding approval of the finished picture.⁴⁴

The PCA’s official synopsis of the finished film classified it as “murder mystery (horrific?),” suggesting that they saw the shift in content they had hoped to achieve as involving a *generic* shift, as I argued in Chapter Four that they did in their horror censorship of 1936. Their official synopsis and a postscript to its Code certificate expressed doubt as to whether or not the BBFC might classify the film as “horrific.”⁴⁵

Similarly, in November 1940, the PCA rejected *in toto* a script for *Man Made Monster* (Universal, 1941, dir. George Waggner), but advised that:

It is possible that this story might be rewritten so as to overcome the present objections to it. This should include the elimination of gruesome details, possibly through dialogue which would discuss the experiments performed on Dan rather than actually show them.⁴⁶

They accepted a revised script several weeks later but continued to caution that it was “important that gruesomeness *and horror angles* be avoided throughout the finished picture.”⁴⁷ (Italics are mine.) Here, it can be seen that the PCA were returning to a primary concern with visual and aural instances. This is a relaxation of their 1936-1938 policy, but not a return to their earlier construction of “gruesomeness” in 1931-1934 censorship. Crucially, now they hope to mobilise a decrease in such instances to achieve a generic shift away from horror and towards other, less problematic genre angles.

This policy, crucially, depended on an important shift in the PCA's definition of horror, and specifically on the idea that horror films were in fact blends of several genres, of which horror was only one angle, and that therefore these films could also claim less controversial generic identities. PCA came to view horror not as a discrete group of films defined by their possession of problematic visual “gruesomeness” and affective horror, but as one generic ingredient in a film, which could be made less problematic by de-emphasis, and the playing up of other genre angles.

This policy was apparently in the main quite adequate to contain problems with local censor boards. Most new horror films encountered even less local censorship difficulty than *Son of Frankenstein*. In January 1939, *The Invisible Man Returns* was passed without any deletions at all from state boards, as was *The Man They Could Not Hang* in August to December 1939, aside from a single shot of a prisoner's procession to the execution shed, which was deleted by the BBFC, and *The Return of Doctor X* in October to November 1940, although in the UK it was passed, uncut, with a 'H' certificate.⁴⁸

Tower of London was the most heavily censored by local boards of all the surveyed films. In November and December 1939, Massachusetts, Kansas and New York passed *Tower* without cuts, but Ohio and Ontario both cut a number of shots from a torture scene involving Boris Karloff's character Mord lashing a prisoner and putting

him on the rack, while Pennsylvania cut the drowning of the Duke of Clarence, and a shot of Morb impaled by a sword.⁴⁹ The cuts are largely connected to the film's subject matter of medieval torture, and in this are reminiscent of the cutting of torture scenes in *Murders in the Rue Morgue* (discussed in Chapter Three) and *The Black Cat* (discussed in Chapter Four).

Between August and October 1940, *The Mummy's Hand* had only one brief cut for violence in a bar fight, by Ohio's censor board, and another for toilet humour, in Ontario.⁵⁰ 1941's *Man Made Monster*, likewise, experienced only one North American deletion, in British Columbia, of a prisoner's walk to the electric chair. However, the BBFC cut *Man Made Monster* by a substantial 293 feet, eliminating key scenes including the deaths of the title character and villain.⁵¹

In winter 1941 and the early months of 1942, *The Wolf Man* was passed by all the local censor boards except for Chicago, which for reasons which are not immediately obvious, but may indicate they judged the title character's transformation excessively gruesome, eliminated shots of the Wolf Man's feet in his transformed state, and several shots of animal footprints. It should be noted that they left intact all other shots of the transformation and the Wolf Man when transformed.⁵²

The local censorship histories of these films display some continuity with that of the horror films of the latter half of 1935 and 1936, that is to say those subject to the PCA's stricter policy on horror. The horror films of 1936, as I discussed in Chapter Four, tended to undergo most of their censorship during PCA negotiations, and were only occasionally cut by local boards. Only one film, *Tower of London*, was censored by more than one American board, and again only *Tower of London* and *Man Made Monster* experienced any substantial deletions at all. It is also notable that the BBFC intervened only twice to make cuts, relying otherwise on their ratings system of A and H certificates. In summary, while horror films continued to experience sporadic problems with local boards, these appear to have been the exception rather than the norm. Horror was no longer the significant local censorship problem it had been, and its censorship was largely integrated within production via PCA censorship negotiations.

5.3 Diversification and generic hybridity: transformations of horror in the cycles of 1939-1943

In this section I argue that, contrary to the opinions of many horror historians, horror films from 1939 on are not primarily characterised by decline or by a lessening of impact, by diversification and genre-blending. However, the decline of horror films' controversy and censorship difficulties, which occurred for reasons I have argued in my last section, shifted the terms under which horror was discussed. Negative reviews of horror films now far more frequently criticised them for being ineffective than for being unbearably shocking – failed horror becomes horror which fails to horrify, rather than, as in the 1930s, that which horrifies too much. This discursive shift also apparently raised awareness of the former horror cycle's transformation into a standardised genre. Concomitantly, following Altman's cycle-genre-cycle process, which I discussed in my Introduction and Chapter One, we can observe a diversification and dispersal of horror into multiple, generically hybrid cycles, and its transformation from a single cycle into a broader, multi-cycle genre category. The relaxation of horror's censorship difficulties and of the PCA's policy towards horror arguably enabled and, as we have seen in the last section, sometimes actively encouraged its delivery in multiply-genred films. This also enabled a trend towards 'A' picture horror films which combined their horror with expensive historical spectacle and 'quality drama', like *Hunchback of Notre Dame*.

As I have argued throughout this thesis, discourses of affect, and discussions of affect, during the horror cycle were increasingly dominated by the idea of controversy, that horror strongly attracted many consumers but actively repulsed others, sometimes even drawing moral objections. The period from 1939 to 1941, as we have seen, saw a marked decline in the amount of controversy and censorship difficulty encountered by horror films. Concomitantly, discussion of horror's affect in the trade press and media during this period is no longer dominated by the idea of controversy. Instead, as my discussion at the end of the last section might suggest, reviews especially tend to gauge, discuss and analyse the success or failure of particular horror films to elicit strong affective reactions. Moreover, negative criticism of horror undergoes an important shift during this period. Objections and refusals of horror films *per se* are only rarely, as with Vandervoort's letters, on the grounds of morality or disgust. Instead, horror refusers, particularly in the press, generally claim to find horror silly rather than disturbing.

Some comments along these lines, especially in the trade press, combine derision of horror as "hokey" or "silly" with positive affirmations of a vital and stable market of serial consumers or fans of such films. For instance, in August 1940, *Hollywood*

Reporter commented in their review of *The Mummy's Hand*, that the film had "just enough hoke and mystery to satisfy addicts of this type", and commented that it employed "all the trimmings of secret entrances and tunnels and other tricks used successfully in other Universal spook pictures." *Variety* described the same film in jaded and dismissive terms as "another little pseudo chiller", while outside the trade, the *New York Times* commented disparagingly on "the usual mumbo-jumbo of secret tombs in crumbling temples and salacious high priests ...Frightening or funny, take your choice." *Variety* described *The Ghost of Frankenstein* (Universal, 1942, dir. Erle C. Kenton), in which the *Frankenstein* series lost Karloff and moved from prestige productions to regular programmers, as "melodramatic hoke for those susceptible to this type film entertainment". *Motion Picture Herald* said of *The Wolf Man* (Universal, 1941, dir. George Waggner), despite its impressive box office performance, that "the picture is for inveterates in the audience sector to which it is pointed."⁵³

Some of this discussion of horror as a niche market, albeit a stable one, was apparently played into concerns about appealing to female consumers. *Variety's* review of *The Return of Doctor X* commented that although "addicts of the gory and the macabre should get a kick out of this chip off the Frankenstein block ... Average drama femme customer won't cotton to the theme, but the film should pass muster in those spots where they prefer to take their horror straight."⁵⁴ As we shall see, a broad trend in 1940s horror films attempted to directly address this and specifically shape films to include elements which could appeal to this conceived "average drama femme customer."

Such criticism suggests that the appearance of this trend might be linked to a broader change in horror's cultural status. Now less shocking and broadly controversial, horror films were devalued, and some commentators mock them as an indication of their own sophisticated taste. Significantly, more than one such article suggests that mocking horror films is not incompatible with enjoying them or being affected by them, but conversely is a way for spectators to consume and enjoy watching horror films while maintaining their identity as 'sophisticated' consumers. The *New York Times'* review of *Son of Frankenstein* elaborated:

... if Universal's "Son of Frankenstein," at the Rivoli, isn't the silliest picture ever made, it's a sequel to the silliest picture ever made, which is even sillier. But its silliness is deliberate – a very shrewd silliness, perpetrated by a good director in the best traditions of cinematic horror, so that even while you laugh at its nonsense you may be struck with the notion that perhaps that's as good a way of enjoying oneself at a movie as any.⁵⁵

The rest of the review goes on to mock *Son's* use of established horror tropes, like its gloomy Gothic castle, while making it clear that he thoroughly enjoyed the film. There is some evidence that particular audiences took to attending horror films specifically in order to "spoof" or affectionately mock them. Joe Breen made an illuminating comment on the 1938 *Dracula/Frankenstein* revival to Brooke Wilkinson of the BBFC. He said that "Audiences, hereabouts, have turned to laughing at them – "spoofing" them – and refusing to take them seriously ... two of our companies have in mind making some "horror" pictures, with the thought that this same curious reaction on the part of audiences may turn them into good box-office successes."⁵⁶ As I will elaborate below, such reactions were generically productive – from 1939, the studios took advantage of such reactions with a growing number of horror comedies, starting with *The Gorilla* and with a horror-comedy remake of *The Cat and the Canary* starring the established comedy actor Bob Hope.

By the late 1930s, despite the *Dracula/Frankenstein* revival's breakout success, straightforward horror was regarded by the trade press as something of a niche market. Although a number of horror films, especially from Universal's horror unit, which I will discuss below, attempted to corner this fan market, the more dominant trend was for horror films to seek to increase their audience by multiply-genred films which could attract both horror fans and other kinds of consumer. As well as the established blendings of horror with the broader genre of crime and mystery films, it became common for studios to make horror-comedies, lavish horror-melodrama prestige pictures, and even a musical. As I argued at the beginning of this chapter, this broad range of genre-blending horror films has so far been largely been neglected by studies of 1940s horror.

As a general rule, the higher the budget, the more likely the film was to attempt to blend genres to attract a wider audience. This trend was helped considerably by the 1940 consent decrees, signed by the five major studios, which outlawed blind selling and considerably reduced block booking. Since this change meant that a studio's B grade films could no longer be sold along with their more expensive productions, it tended to encourage the larger studios to concentrate on the higher end of the market, leaving the lower end open for smaller studios, instead of each studio making a variety of products.⁵⁷ Universal and Columbia, being smaller, were led to specialise in programmers. However, Universal also produced periodic, clearly distinguished

multiple-genre horror prestige pictures, and Columbia's horror-crime films attempted to appeal to multiple audiences in an established mode.

I have mentioned above how the studios took advantage of audience and critical "spoofing" of straight horror opened by producing horror comedies. This was an early trend: in April 1939, *Motion Picture Herald* reported on the production of *The Gorilla*, which "will combine two kinds of entertainment, crazy comedy and chilling melodrama ... while plenty of horrifying mystery will be included, the greater emphasis will be placed on comedy."⁵⁸ As the terminology used here suggests – "chilling melodrama" and "horrifying mystery" actually imply themselves mixtures of horror with melodrama and mystery, *The Gorilla* actually combined at least *three* genres, and added to them the established market for the Ritz brothers as comedy players. *Variety* admirably commented on the profitability of this mixture:

Combo of broad slapstick, surprise situations and eerie chills is well-mixed at a speedy pace to provide a good programmer that will get by for normal biz where the Ritzes can attract. ... It's typed mystery-chiller comedy material that can be repeated at intervals with slight script variations.⁵⁹

Other horror comedies soon followed. *The Cat and the Canary* (Paramount, 1939, dir. Elliott Nugent), a remake of an old dark house play which had already been filmed twice, was the first in a series of Bob Hope comedy thrillers which played heavily on horror clichés. As well as the follow-ups starring Hope, it also gave rise to numerous imitations and follow-ups like *The Black Cat* (Universal, 1941, dir. Albert S. Rogell), which was very different to its 1934 namesake, and used the presence of Basil Rathbone and Bela Lugosi to try to market it for horror as well as for comedy. The same year, *Hold That Ghost* (Universal, 1941, dir. Arthur Lubin) very successfully introduced the comedian team Abbott and Costello to the genre. Horror comedies allowed their audiences to be simultaneously horror fans and the sophisticated consumers who mocked horror conventions, widening the potential audience to both horror fans and active refusers of horror, as well as a more general comedy audience.

A more established approach to blending horror with other genres was taken by the horror/crime films which Warner Bros. amongst others had developed in the 1930s with films like *Doctor X*. A broad strand of horror programmers utilised this formula, especially Columbia's 'mad doctor' series, a three-film series for which they contracted Karloff: *The Man They Could Not Hang* (Columbia, 1939), *Before I Hang* (Columbia, 1940, dir. Nick Grinde). Modern-dress urban settings, the playing down of

fantastic elements and playing up of science, and use of elements of the crime film allowed for films to be cheaply made with standard sets and costumes – and also potentially widened the film's audience. *Motion Picture Herald* commented favourably on *The Man They Could Not Hang*'s inclusion, like *The Walking Dead* before it, of a recent scientific development, the 'Lindbergh heart':

The thesis is smooth and sure screen stuff, readily adaptable for "boo" ballyhoo. On the other hand, a more temperate approach may be had by utilization of the reams of popular and scientific publicity afforded the Carrel-Lindbergh mechanical heart apparatus.⁶⁰

Universal's 1939 adaptation of *Hound of the Baskervilles*, similarly, marketed the film as a "mystery chiller" which could draw regular horror consumers *and* the usual audience for Sherlock Holmes films, and cast an established horror player, Basil Rathbone, as Sherlock Holmes. *Variety* commented that the film "retains all of the suspensefully dramatic ingredients of Conan Doyle's popular adventure of Sherlock Holmes" but was also "a startling mystery-chiller developed along logical lines without resort to implausible situations and over-theatrics", and predicted that the film "will find many bookings on top spots of key dualers that attract thriller-mystery patronage."⁶¹

I mentioned above that part of the sense within the trade that horror was at least potentially a niche market was related to ideas that horror itself might be unappealing to female audiences. One trend in particular seemed particularly aimed at attracting female audiences by including elements commonly considered appealing to women within the trade. A number of different studios between 1939 and 1942 made horror films which were also visually sumptuous big-budget period pieces. *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (RKO, 1939, dir. William Dieterle), the first of these, was reviewed as a horror film – *Variety* described it as a "super thriller-chiller" which paraded "vivid and gruesome horror" but also had a "background of elaborate medieval pageantry and mob scenes". *Variety* commented admiringly that this gave the film "strong dramatic ingredients for mass audience appeal" which the magazine predicted would ensure it "[rolled] up healthy grosses at the ticket windows."⁶² The film could also be located in generic terms more appealing to female consumers: as a quality drama, a well-made prestige picture and a literary adaptation. It grossed an impressive \$3.2 million.⁶³

Hunchback's enormously successful attempt to hybridise horror with other 'quality drama' elements in order to render it suitable for prestige pictures again was followed by a high budget MGM adaptation of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (MGM, 1941, dir. Victor

Fleming) starring Ingrid Bergman, Spencer Tracy and Lana Turner. Reviews emphasised the film's prestige status and strong performances of the three stars: "This one is for major first runs", said *Variety*.⁶⁴

Material surrounding planning and production of a remake of *Phantom of the Opera* just at the end of the period of my main discussion, in 1943, is particularly illuminating about how studios, in this case Universal, sought to locate these prestige-horror offerings in generic and marketing terms. In February 1943 *The New York Times* reported on Universal's early claims about the significant ways the new *Phantom* would differ from its predecessor:

... according to the studio, with less phantom and more opera. ... described by its producer, George Waggner, as being a "rational phantom." The "horror" features of the 1925 silent picture and its dubbed-sound version of 1929 will be retained to a degree, but the new phantom, to be played by Claude Rains, will be given a logical reason for becoming the ghost of the opera house.⁶⁵

The key claims here are that there would be "less phantom and more opera" – that horror would be deemphasised and musical spectacle played up – and that it would be a "rational phantom" – that, unlike in the previous film, and implicitly unlike in horror in general, the Phantom would be given a motivation for his actions which would be plausible and interesting to non-horror fans.

Reviews of the finished film show that this attempt to relocate *Phantom* generically and thus make the film attract several audiences at once was very successful. *Western Family* sold the film to its readership as a mainstream attraction in these terms:

If you saw *The Phantom of the Opera* way back when – with Lon Chaney doing the horrible – just forget it. This *Phantom* is a different deal. Go and see it as if it was another picture. Go without prejudice ... The new *Phantom* is a picture devoted to sound and color ... distinctly a musical ... The elements of mystery, suspense and terror so predominant in the novel and the original motion picture, are completely overshadowed by an air of comic opera mock-seriousness.⁶⁶

Most reviews do not go so far as this one in suggesting that horror has been eliminated entirely, but rather see it as balanced with elements which could appeal to different audiences. However, nearly all reviews of the film compare it to the 1925 version. They universally do so by situating the Chaney version as horror, and the new version as a hybrid form, and improved by being so. *Harrison's Reports*, a conservative trade paper which had largely disapproved of the 1930s horror cycle,

wrote that while “the original version, ... was a thriller of the horror type”, the new *Phantom* has been altered in a way that makes it more of a musical than a thriller”, but conceded that it “[retained] the horrific flavor of the original, but to a lesser degree.”⁶⁷

As I have argued in Chapters One and Two, the 1925 *Phantom of the Opera* was not originally produced or consumed as a horror film, but was relocated as horror in the early 1930s, originally by attempts to promote the horror cycle and subsequently by reviews. The apparently universal belief in reviews of the 1943 *Phantom* that its predecessor was made as a horror film shows how successful this early 1930s regenrification. This said, comparisons of the two versions in 1943 reviews tend to rest on general beliefs about horror and are therefore informative on that basis.

Hollywood Reporter notes how *Phantom* differed, and in their eyes exceeded in ambition, the bulk of Universal’s horror output, noting that Universal’s regular horror producer, George Waggner, had seen “an opportunity to do something far better” than “just another horror drama”. According to the *Reporter*, the story and style had been transformed to make it “an attraction for the discriminating” which appealed on multiple fronts, and the balanced direction which “gives proper emphasis to each value of the entertainment”:

You can call it a rare musical treat, an arrestingly beautiful spectacle in the magnificence of its Technicolor photography, or a handsomely performed psychological melodrama.⁶⁸

The review further comments that the *Phantom* has now been given a motivation and a more credible backstory, and Rains gives “an always understanding story of a man’s disintegration. He is much more than simply a horribly deformed character who haunts the vast subterranean passageways of the Paris Opera House.”⁶⁹

Look magazine’s review claimed that the film’s use of music was particularly valuable in broadening its appeal:

The silent film, forerunner of our current *Frankenstein* and *Wolf Man* blood-spatterers, was strong meat. But this version, less creepy, has probably wider appeal because producer George Waggner and director Arthur Lubin have made tuneful use of popular operatic arias.⁷⁰

This review also notes that while Lon Chaney “tortured his face with horrendous make-up”, Rains “plays his madman straight – the scarred side of his face hidden”. In

fact, both actors spend much of the action masked and are unmasked in key scenes, but in emphasising Rains' mask, the review suggests that his performance is both subtler, and more appealing to non-horror consumers. Conversely, the generic transformation of *Phantom* was occasionally disparaged by reviews from a pro-horror perspective. The *New Yorker* complained that "the old version had Lon Chaney, who scared you plenty, and the new one has Claude Rains, who somehow doesn't."⁷¹ *Phantom of the Opera* in some respects marked a culmination of the horror prestige picture, in which horror affect was deemphasised and located as only one of a range of generic and non-generic pleasures designed to attract as wide a range of the available audience as possible. Its aspirations to be seen as a quality picture were particularly successful. It won two 1943 Academy Awards for Color Art Direction and Color Cinematography, and was nominated for two more for its sound and scoring. As a case study it, and other horror prestige films like *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, show how far 1940s horror can vary from the way most historians have presented it, as restricted to disreputable and derided B-films.

I argued at the beginning of this chapter that, although much discussion of 1940s horror centres on the output of the horror units of Universal and RKO, it tends to misrepresent them. Accounts like that of Andrew Tudor, quoted earlier, take the films of one or both of these units to be more or less representative of horror in the period, when in fact, as I have argued, they were only two cycles among a wide and generically varied range of horror films and cycles produced during this period, including a number of artistically respectable 'A' pictures whose existence challenges the very premises of such accounts.

The bulk of the films of both RKO's and Universal's dedicated horror production units were released after 1943, and thus fall outside the period I discuss in this chapter. Nevertheless, since most existing studies of this period take them to be central to it, I wish here to briefly suggest how we might begin to re-evaluate their early 1940s output in the light of the discussion elsewhere in this chapter.

After *Son of Frankenstein*, with *The Mummy's Hand* (Universal, 1940, dir. Christy Cabanne) and *The Invisible Man Returns* (Universal, 1940, dir. Joe May), the studio established a horror unit dedicated to producing modestly-budgeted programmers which, while keeping the setting and furniture of their 1930s horrors, emphasised sequels and serialisation, and substantially toned down both extreme elements of plot

content and visual gruesomeness. Karloff and Rathbone were replaced by the cheaper Lon Chaney Jr. and Lionel Atwill.

We have seen that scholars such as Andrew Tudor see Universal's 1940s horror as a degraded and devalued version of their 1930s films, and that scholars like Edmund Bansak have derogated Universal for "pandering to the juvenile trade". I would like to argue that in the light of the variety of Universal's own horror output during this period, which also includes films like the horror-angled Sherlock Holmes film *Hound of the Baskervilles* and the horror historical spectacular *Hunchback of Notre Dame*, we can re-evaluate the programmers of Waggner's dedicated horror unit as representing not an artistic decline so much as a deliberate market strategy. We have seen that the trade viewed the horror fan market as stable and lucrative.

Universal's horror films became sixty minute fairy tales, highly-stylised and standardised serials where the staples of cast, plot, setting were established, and which heavily relied on cultivating franchise figures like the Monster, the Mummy, the Wolf Man and the Invisible Man. George Waggner, who served as director and producer on many of these films, was quoted in a 1942 article in the *Saturday Evening Post* on his seven-point formula for Universal's brand of 1940s horror, a formula which emphasises machinery and setting over affect. Horror films must be "once-upon-a-time tales", "believable in characterisation", with "unusual technical effects" (points one to three). There must be a "major monster" and a "secondary character of weird appearance, such as [Lugosi's] Igor." They must "confess right off that the film is a horror film" but contain "a pish-tush character to express the normal skepticism of the audience" (points four to six) and "be based on some pseudoscientific premise."⁷² The formula, in contrast to most other contemporary horror and quasi-horror films, revels in the very elements of horror which reviewers now tended to mock, while nevertheless acknowledging the steady demand for such films. It suggests how Universal successfully cultivated the horror fan market and especially youth by offering horror as a tightly defined series, a product whose pleasures were reliably repetitious.

Universal had arguably taken note of the fact that the *Dracula/Frankenstein* revival had owed much revenue to a craze for the double-bill among school-age audiences who had not seen the films the first time round. *Variety's* box office report for the revival's "terrific" San Francisco run comments that "about 90% of the trade seems to be high school kids." Katherine Vandervoort's complaints to Breen had also focused

on the craze among the schoolchildren of her area, both high school age and younger, for the double-bill, which many of them watched repeatedly.⁷³ Prior to this, as we have seen, the Payne Fund Studies inadvertently exposed childrens' appetite for horror film consumption. Rather than speak in derogatory terms of 'juvenilization', scholars could benefit from treating children and adolescents as legitimate consumers, and examine the which Universal's Waggnor horror unit films might have a clear interest in remaining accessible to children and teenagers, as well as to the established market of adult horror fans.

Although RKO's horror unit films are often evaluated as a cut above Universal, in fact they represent a very similar market strategy in respect of pursuing the horror fan market. RKO's horror unit was set up in imitation of Universal's, in the wake of *The Wolf Man's* box office success.⁷⁴ Moreover, RKO's very different house style to Universal, the 'Lewton formula' of realism and suggestion, with its extreme favouring of ellipsis and suggestion over gruesomeness, and atmosphere over action, can be understood not merely as demonstrating their superior craftsmanship to Universal but as part of a strategy of product differentiation. Lewton's own pronouncements in interviews and articles about the RKO cycle are suggestive on this front. For instance:

We tossed away the horror formula right from the beginning. No grisly stuff for us. No masklike faces hardly human, with gnashing teeth and hair standing on end. No creaking physical manifestations. No horror piled on horror. You can't keep up horror that's long sustained. It becomes something to laugh at. But take a sweet love story, or a story of sexual antagonisms, about people like the rest of us, not freaks, and cut in your horror here and there by suggestion, and you've got something.⁷⁵

While this description is accurate insofar as it speaks of Lewton's films themselves, it also shows Lewton keen to define his own unit's output against the current competing product of Universal's horror unit. Lewton's rhetoric seems to target both 'sophisticated' refusers of horror, by suggesting that his films were conceived in reaction to mocking of horror, and established fans of horror, by suggesting that his films are *better and more effective* horror. While further explorations of these issues are beyond the scope of this thesis, I have aimed here to briefly argue for a reconsideration of the market strategies and relationship of these two horror units, and their place in the field of 1940s horror as a whole.

Conclusion

The narrative of discourses of affect in the 1930s horror cycle and its early 1940s aftermath which I have offered during the course of this thesis aims to refocus current scholarly understandings of 1930s horror in a number of key ways.

The narrative resulting from the investigations of this thesis offers several specific and hopefully useful challenges to current scholarship upon the 1930s cycle and, to a more limited extent, upon the period from 1936 to 1943. I have offered a full narrative of several neglected areas of study: of the discursive disputes around horror *between* different censorship bodies and campaigns, which is much less well-charted than disputes between studios and censorship; of the end of the 1930s horror cycle and the PCA's direct involvement with it, and again with the horror hiatus of 1936-8; and lastly of generic transformation and vitality in the horror films of 1939-1941, an underdiscussed period.

The work done in this thesis could be extended by future projects in a number of potentially useful ways. One way would be through an expansion of scope, examining to what extent discourses of affect played into controversies around other kinds of film during the period. I have argued that horror to some extent appeared present an anomaly to social effects based censorship discourse, as its reasoning focused on imitative behaviour rather than affect. A broader archival investigation following on from this project could investigate whether any other kinds of controversial film at the time presented such discursive anomalies.

Another less ambitious, but clearly useful expansion of the project would be to make a detailed archival investigation, along the lines of this thesis, into the British marketing, censorship and reception of the films of the 1930s horror cycle, an investigation limits of scope have prevented me from making in this thesis. Although Sarah J. Smith has offered an admirably comprehensive archival survey, the fragmentary and dispersed nature of much of the material involved (local government records, for instance) means that Smith's survey does not fully fulfil the needs of my own project.

Another obvious jumping off point could entail examining disputes over affect in other horror controversies. I have mentioned at various points the striking parallels to be

found, especially in the use of social effects reasoning by later anti-horror campaigns. However, as enticing as it is to draw parallels, this thesis has shown that the discursive uses of such understandings of horror were limited and directed to some extent by historical conditions, and thus underwent transformation during the period of my study. Therefore, any study of later horror cycles or controversies following my basic line of argument would have to remain attentive to disputes at both a broader and microhistorical level, and to the transformations undergone by discourses of horror affect and social effects between the 1930s cycle and the period of the new study.

This thesis is finally an attempt to argue for the benefits of seeing 1930s horror – both as a genre category and as a description of audience response – as *not* predefined but constantly being discursively redefined, disputed and transformed. It seeks to demonstrate the value of, instead of eliding this process of transformation and dispute, investigating its complexities and contradictions more fully.

Notes to Introduction

- ¹ Matt Hills, *The Pleasures of Horror* (London: Continuum, 2005), p. 6.
- ² Hills, p. 13-32.
- ³ "McDermott Says, 'Make 'Em Twice, If It Clicks There'll Be a Cycle Anyway'", *Variety*, July 19 1932, p. 2.
- ⁴ Tino Balio, *Grand Design: Hollywood as a Modern Business Enterprise, 1930-1939* (London: University of California Press, 1995), p. 310.
- ⁵ Rick Altman, *Film/Genre* (London: BFI, 1999), p. 54-68.
- ⁶ Balio, *Grand Design*, p. 299; Thomas Schatz, *The Genius of the System: Hollywood Filmmaking in the Studio Era* (London: Faber, 1998), p. 85.
- ⁷ David J. Skal, *Hollywood Gothic: The Tangled Web of Dracula from Novel to Stage to Screen* (New York: Norton, 1990), p.79.
- ⁸ Philip J. Riley, ed., *Dracula* (New Jersey: MagicImage filmbooks, 1990), p. 55.
- ⁹ Budget for *Dracula*, Universal Studios collection, Archives of Performing Arts, Cinema-Television Library, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, California.
- ¹⁰ Skal, *Hollywood Gothic*, p. 147-151.
- ¹¹ Schatz, *The Genius of the System*, p. 87.
- ¹² Schatz, *The Genius of the System*, p. 87.
- ¹³ David J. Skal, *The Monster Show: a Cultural History of Horror* (London: Plexus, 1994), p.106-110.
- ¹⁴ *Vanity Fair*, November 1935. Reprinted in Rhona Berenstein, *Attack of the Leading Ladies: Gender, Sexuality and Spectatorship in Classic Horror Cinema* (New York: Columbia University Press, c1996), p. 198.
- ¹⁵ Box office reports, *Variety*, December 8 1931, p. 9.
- ¹⁶ Box office reports, *Variety*, December 29 1931, p. 8.
- ¹⁷ Box office reports, *Variety*, January 5 1932, p. 8.
- ¹⁸ Box office reports, *Variety*, December 8 1931, p. 9.
- ¹⁹ Box office reports, *Variety*, December 29 1931, p. 8.
- ²⁰ Box office reports, *Variety*, January 5 1932, p. 9.
- ²¹ Box office reports, *Variety*, January 5 1932, p. 8.
- ²² Review of *Murders in the Rue Morgue*, *Variety*, February 16 1932.
- ²³ Box office reports, *Variety*, February 16 1932, p. 9.
- ²⁴ Box office reports, *Variety*, February 23 1932, p. 8.
- ²⁵ Box office reports, *Variety*, March 29 1932, p. 10.
- ²⁶ Positive comments about *Behind the Mask's* performance appear in *Variety's* box office reports for March 8, 1932 (Philadelphia), p. 10; March 15, 1932 (Providence and Denver), p. 8; and April 19, 1932 (Louisville), p. 19.
- ²⁷ Review, *Behind the Mask*, *Variety*, May 3 1932.
- ²⁸ Review, *The Monster Walks*, *Variety*, May 31, 1932.
- ²⁹ Box office reports, *Variety*, Feb 23 1932, p. 8-10; Mar 15 1932, p. 14; April 12, 1932; July 26 1932. Reviews of *Freaks* in *Motion Picture Herald*, Jan 23, 1932; *Time* magazine, April 18, 1932, *Los Angeles Examiner*, February 13 1932, *Atlanta Journal*, February 19, 1932. See Chapter Three of this thesis for a much more detailed citation and discussion of *Freaks'* reception.
- ³⁰ Box office reports, *Variety*, February 9 1932, p. 9.
- ³¹ Review, *Almost Married*, *Variety*, July 26, 1932.
- ³² Positive comments about *White Zombie's* box office in *Variety* box office reports August 2, 1932, p. 8-9 (Kansas City, Providence, New York City); August 9, 1932, p. 9 (Washington, New York City second week); August 16, 1932, p. 7 (New York City third week). Positive comments on *Doctor X* August 9, 1932, p. 9 (New York City); August 16, 1932, p. 7 (New York City and Indianapolis); September 20, 1932 (Buffalo).
- ³³ Review of *Doctor X*, *Variety*, August 9 1932.
- ³⁴ Comparative box office grosses for October 1932, *Variety*, November 1 1932, p. 23.
- ³⁵ Comparative box office grosses for November, *Variety*, December 27, 1932, p. 10, 27.
- ³⁶ Review of *Kongo*, *Variety*, November 22, 1932.

- ³⁷ Comparative box office reports for March 1932, *Variety*, March 21, 1933, p. 11; and for April 1932, *Variety*, April 25, 1933, p. 11, 25.
- ³⁸ Review of *King Kong*, *Variety*, Mar 7, 1933.
- ³⁹ Box office reports, *Variety*, January 31 1933, p. 8.
- ⁴⁰ Box office reports, *Variety*, February 7 1933, p. 10.
- ⁴¹ Review of *The Vampire Bat*, *Variety*, Jan 24 1933, p. 19.
- ⁴² Review of *The Monkey's Paw*, *Variety*, June 6, 1933.
- ⁴³ Box office reports, *Variety*, November 21, 1933, p. 9.
- ⁴⁴ Review of *The Invisible Man*, *Variety*, Nov 21, 1933.
- ⁴⁵ Review of *The Invisible Man*, *The Hollywood Reporter*, Oct 27 1933.
- ⁴⁶ Box office reports, *Variety*, April 24, 1935, p. 8; May 15 1935, p. 9.
- ⁴⁷ Box office statistics from *Variety*, May 8 – August 28 1935.
- ⁴⁸ Gregory William Mank, *Hollywood Cauldron: Thirteen Horror Films From the Genre's Golden Age* (London: McFarland, 1995), p. 123.
- ⁴⁹ Box office statistics from *Variety*, January 15 1936.
- ⁵⁰ Box office statistics from *Variety*, January 15 - August 26 1936.
- ⁵¹ Mank, *Hollywood Cauldron*, p.xviii.
- ⁵² Review of *The Walking Dead*, *New York Times*, March 2 1936; reviews of *Dracula's Daughter*, *Hollywood Reporter*, May 2 1936 and *Variety*, May 20 1936; review of *Mark of the Vampire*, *Motion Picture Herald*, April 6 1935; review of *Mad Love*, *Motion Picture Daily*, undated; *Film Daily* review of *The Raven*, April 4 1935.
- ⁵³ Poster for *The Man Who Reclaimed His Head*, reprinted in Michael Brunas, John Brunas and Tom Weaver, *Universal Horrors: the Studio's Classic Films, 1931-1946* (London: McFarland, 1990).
- ⁵⁴ Review of *The Man Who Reclaimed His Head*, *Variety*, Jan 15, 1935.
- ⁵⁵ Poster for *The Story of Louis Pasteur*, reprinted in Altman, *Film/Genre*, p. 57. Altman also points out the use of a horror angle in service of his point that classical Hollywood marketing often evoked multiple genre identities in a film's marketing to widen its appeal.
- ⁵⁶ Box office reports, *Variety*, June 26 1935, p. 10.
- ⁵⁷ Box office reports, *Variety*, July 31 1935, p.9; April 8 1936, p. 9.
- ⁵⁸ Box office reports, *Variety*, June 17 1936, p. 6, 8.
- ⁵⁹ "Horror Films Taken Off U Sked", *Variety*, May 6, 1936.
- ⁶⁰ *The Devil Doll* press book, p. 3, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Production Material Collection, Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, Los Angeles, California.
- ⁶¹ Review of *Phantom of the Opera* (1943) in *Harrison's Reports*, August 21 1943.
- ⁶² Donald Crafton, *The Talkies: America's Transition to Sound 1926-1931* (London: University of California Press, 1999), p. 188-190; Balio, *Grand Design*, p. 13.
- ⁶³ Schatz, *The Genius of the System*, p. 87.
- ⁶⁴ Mark Vieira, *Sin in Soft Focus: Pre-Code Hollywood* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1999), p. 19.
- ⁶⁵ Thomas Doherty, *Pre-Code Hollywood: Sex, immorality, and insurrection in American cinema, 1930-1934* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), p. 29.
- ⁶⁶ Balio, *Grand Design*, p. 13.
- ⁶⁷ James M. Skinner, *The Cross and the Cinema: the Catholic Legion of Decency and the National Catholic Office for Motion Pictures, 1933-1970* (London: Praeger, 1993), p. 16.
- ⁶⁸ Balio, *Grand Design*, p. 15.
- ⁶⁹ Balio, *Grand Design*, p. 32.
- ⁷⁰ Crafton, *The Talkies*, p. 193.
- ⁷¹ "Sound Film's Production Cost Near Ten Times that of Silent", *Exhibitors Herald World* supplement in *Motion Picture Herald*, December 27 1930, p. 7.
- ⁷² *Ibid.*
- ⁷³ Crafton, p. 10-18.
- ⁷⁴ Richard Maltby, "'Baby Face' or How Joe Breen Made Barbara Stanwyck Atone For Causing the Wall Street Crash" in *Screen*, vol. 27 No. 2, March - April 1986, p. 30.
- ⁷⁵ Richard Maltby, "'Baby Face'", p. 30.
- ⁷⁶ Maltby, "The Production Code and the Hays Office," in Balio, *Grand Design*, p. 59.

- ⁷⁷ Laemmle is quoted in a letter from Universal V-P Robert Cochrane to Hays, dated April 5, 1927, concerning Universal's plans to film *The Shanghai Gesture*, a sensational stage play by John Colton. Hays Office microfilm, University of Southern California, quoted in Vieira, *Sin in Soft Focus*, p. 14.
- ⁷⁸ Maltby, "Baby Face", p. 28.
- ⁷⁹ Maltby, "Baby Face", p. 29, "The Production Code and the Hays Office," p. 46.
- ⁸⁰ Maltby, "Baby Face", p. 29, "The Production Code and the Hays Office," p. 46.
- ⁸¹ Maltby, "Baby Face", p. 29.
- ⁸² Maltby, "The Production Code and the Hays Office," p. 45.
- ⁸³ Maltby, "The Production Code and the Hays Office," p. 45.
- ⁸⁴ Ruth Vasey, *The World According to Hollywood, 1919-1939* (Exeter, University of Exeter, 1997) p. 101.
- ⁸⁵ Maltby, "The Production Code and the Hays Office," p. 49.
- ⁸⁶ Maltby, "The Production Code and the Hays Office," p. 54.
- ⁸⁷ Ruth Vasey, "An American Tragedy: A Comparison of Film and Literary Censorship", in *Quarterly Journal of Film and Video*, 1995, Vol. 15, no. 4, p. 87-98.
- ⁸⁸ Doherty, *Pre-Code Hollywood*, p. 349.
- ⁸⁹ "What are the Movies Doing to Us? Lowell Heads Movement to Find Out", *San Francisco News*, 24 August 1933.
- ⁹⁰ Richard Maltby, "Baby Face", p. 22.
- ⁹¹ The fullest account of the Code's writing is by Maltby, in "The Production Code and the Hays Office", in Balio, *Grand Design*. Several different drafts from the writing of the Code, including those by Daniel Lord, Irving Thalberg and Jason Joy, are reprinted in "Documents on the Genesis of the Production Code," ed. Richard Maltby, in *Quarterly Review of Film and Video* vol. 15, no.4, 1995, edited by Lea Jacobs and Richard Maltby, Special Issue of on "Rethinking the Production Code", p. 33-63.
- ⁹² To give a typical example, in Vito Russo, *The Celluloid Closet: Homosexuality in the Movies* (London: Harper & Row, 1981) and the documentary of the same name which adapts it, the Production Code (consistently referred to as the "Hays Code") is considered simply as a list of prohibitions which could be got around by clever filmmakers: in this case, to present or hint at gay characters and relationships in defiance of censorship. Such views of the Code and its administration, while they are often broadly accurate, tend to skim over the details of the Code's basis in a particular moral and religious credo, and its application via a process of negotiation.
- ⁹³ Maltby, "The Production Code and the Hays Office," p. 43.
- ⁹⁴ Raymond Moley, *The Hays Office* (Indianapolis and New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1945), p. 80. Breen had previously worked for Cardinal Mundelein, in charge of press relations for the 1926 Eucharistic Congress in Chicago.
- ⁹⁵ Edward De Grazia and Roger K. Newman, *Banned films: Movies, Censors and the First Amendment* (New York: RR Bowker Company, 1982), p. 37-38.
- ⁹⁶ Statistic and quote from Maltby, "The Production Code and the Hays Office", p. 52.
- ⁹⁷ Maltby, "The Production Code and the Hays Office", p. 56.
- ⁹⁸ Garth. S Jowett, Ian C. Jarvie, and Kathryn H. Fuller, *Children and the Movies: Media Influence and the Payne Fund Controversy*, p. 93-98.
- ⁹⁹ Maltby, "The Production Code and the Hays Office", p. 54.
- ¹⁰⁰ Jowett et al, *Children and the Movies*, p. 99-100.
- ¹⁰¹ Maltby, "The Production Code and the Hays Office", p. 38.
- ¹⁰² Maltby, "The Production Code and the Hays Office," p. 56-57.
- ¹⁰³ Lea Jacobs, *The Wages of Sin: Censorship and the Fallen Woman Film, 1928-1942* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997) , p. 107-111; Vasey, *The World According to Hollywood*, p. 130; Maltby, "The Production Code and the Hays Office," p. 55, 59-61.
- ¹⁰⁴ Maltby, "The Production Code and the Hays Office," p. 59.
- ¹⁰⁵ Moley, *The Hays Office*, pp. 79.
- ¹⁰⁶ Skinner, *The Cross and the Cinema*, p. 34-35.
- ¹⁰⁷ Skinner, *The Cross and the Cinema*, p. 34-35.
- ¹⁰⁸ Maltby, "The Production Code and the Hays Office," p. 60.

- ¹⁰⁹ Vieira, *Sin in Soft Focus*, p. 181.
- ¹¹⁰ Skinner, *The Cross and the Cinema*, p. 35-36.
- ¹¹¹ De Grazia and Newman, *Banned films*, p. 40.
- ¹¹² Maltby, "The Production Code and the Hays Office", p. 59-60.
- ¹¹³ Maltby, "The Production Code and the Hays Office", p. 61.
- ¹¹⁴ De Grazia and Newman, *Banned films*, p. 43.
- ¹¹⁵ Maltby, "The Production Code and the Hays Office," p. 64-65.
- ¹¹⁶ Maltby, "The Production Code and the Hays Office," p. 66.
- ¹¹⁷ Maltby, "The Production Code and the Hays Office," p. 67-70.

Notes to Chapter One

- ¹ For example, Jim Kitses, *Horizons West: Anthony Mann, Budd Boetticher, Sam Peckinpah: Studies of Authorship Within the Western* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1969).
- ² Robin Wood, "American Nightmare: Horror in the 70s", in *Hollywood From Vietnam to Reagan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986).
- ³ Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema", *Screen* 16(3), Autumn 1975; Julia Kristeva, *Pouvoirs d'Horreur [Powers of Horror]* (Paris : Seuil, 1980).
- ⁴ For a much fuller discussion, see David Bordwell and Noël Carroll, *Post-theory: reconstructing film studies* (London: University of Wisconsin Press, 1996).
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- ⁶ Robin Wood, "The American Nightmare: Horror in the 70s"; Barbara Creed, *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis* (London: Routledge, 1993); Bruce Kavin, "The Mummy's Pool", in Barry Keith Grant, ed., *Planks of Reason: Essays on the Horror Film* (Metuchen, New Jersey: Scarecrow Press, 1984).
- ⁷ Altman, *Film/Genre*, p. 24-28. Mark Jancovich, ed., *Horror, The Film Reader* (London, Routledge, 2002), p. 13-15.
- ⁸ Creed, *The Monstrous-Feminine*.
- ⁹ David J. Russell, "Monster Roundup: Reintegrating the Horror Genre", in Nick Browne, ed., *Refiguring American Film Genres: Theory and History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), p. 244-249.
- ¹⁰ Andrew Tudor, *Monsters and Mad Scientists: A Cultural History of the Horror Movie* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), p. 5-6.
- ¹¹ Russell, "Monster Roundup", p. 235, Tudor, *Monsters and Mad Scientists*, p. 8.
- ¹² Tudor, p. 134.
- ¹³ Martin Barker, *The Video Nasties: Freedom and Censorship in the Media* (London: Pluto Press, 1984); Mark Jancovich, "'A Real Shocker': authenticity, genre and the struggle for distinction", *Continuum*, Vol. 14, No. 1, 2000, p. 23-35; "Genre and the Audience: Genre Classifications and Cultural Distinctions in the Mediation of *The Silence of the Lambs*", in Jancovich, ed., *Horror, the Film Reader*.
- ¹⁴ Russell, "Monster Roundup", p. 233-235.
- ¹⁵ Altman, *Film/Genre*, p. 16-18.
- ¹⁶ Steve Neale, *Genre and Hollywood* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 2.
- ¹⁷ Altman, *Film/Genre*, p. 49-68; Neale, *Genre and Hollywood*, p. 5, 9, 58-59, 234-236.
- ¹⁸ Altman, *Film/Genre*, p. 38.
- ¹⁹ Altman, *Film/Genre*, p. 59.
- ²⁰ Altman, *Film/Genre*, p. 60.
- ²¹ Altman, *Film/Genre*, p. 62.
- ²² Altman, *Film/Genre*, p. 48.
- ²³ Altman, *Film/Genre*, p. 70.
- ²⁴ James Naremore, "American Film Noir: the History of an Idea" in *Film Quarterly*, Vol. 49, 2, Winter 1995-6, p. 12-28. For a fuller discussion see Naremore, *More Than Night: Film Noir in its Contexts* (London: University of California Press, 1998).
- ²⁵ Altman, *Film/Genre*, p. 71, Neale, *Genre and Hollywood*, p. 179-202.
- ²⁶ Altman, *Film/Genre*, p. 97-99.
- ²⁷ Altman, *Film/Genre*, p. 26.
- ²⁸ Neale, *Genre and Hollywood*, p. 39.
- ²⁹ Altman, p. 57.
- ³⁰ Altman, *Film/Genre*, p. 59.
- ³¹ "For Your Program", *Dracula* press book. Reprinted in Riley, *Dracula*.
- ³² Altman, *Film/Genre*, p. 93.
- ³³ Altman, *Film/Genre*, p. 93-6.
- ³⁴ Barker, *The Video Nasties*, cited in Altman, *Film/Genre*, pp. 95.
- ³⁵ Altman, *Film/Genre*, p. 60.

- ³⁶ Altman, *Film/Genre*, p. 62.
- ³⁷ Review of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, *Motion Picture Herald*, 26 December 1931.
- ³⁸ Review of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, *Variety*, 5 January 1932.
- ³⁹ "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde", anonymous review, 1932. *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* clipping file, Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, Los Angeles.
- ⁴⁰ Review of *The Monster Walks*. *Motion Picture Herald*, Feb 6 1932.
- ⁴¹ Altman, *Film/Genre*, p. 59.
- ⁴² *Mad Love* press manual, MGM files, Margaret Herrick Library.
- ⁴³ Berenstein, *Attack of the Leading Ladies*, p. 60-87.
- ⁴⁴ *Frankenstein* press book, reprinted in Philip J. Riley, *Frankenstein* (New Jersey: Magicimage Filmbooks, 1989).
- ⁴⁵ *Frankenstein* press book, reprinted in Riley.
- ⁴⁶ Balio, *Grand Design*, p. 298-299.
- ⁴⁷ Berenstein, *Attack of the Leading Ladies*, p. 15.
- ⁴⁸ Paul Wells, *The Horror Genre: From Beezlebub to Blair Witch* (London: Wallflower Press, 2000), p. 3, 50-51.
- ⁴⁹ Skal, *The Monster Show*, p. 114.
- ⁵⁰ Robin Wood, "The American Nightmare: Horror in the 70s".
- ⁵¹ Hills, *The Pleasures of Horror*, p. 2.
- ⁵² Skal, *The Monster Show*, p. 168-169.
- ⁵³ *Dracula* press book, quoted in Skal p. 127.
- ⁵⁴ Nelson B. Bell, "Thoughts on Horror Era", *Washington Post*, February 21, 1932. Cited in Skal, *The Monster Show*, p. 168.
- ⁵⁵ Phillips, p. 6.
- ⁵⁶ Berenstein, p. 10; Mark Jancovich, *Rational Fears: American Horror in the 1950s* (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 1996), p. 10.
- ⁵⁷ For example, Barker, *The Video Nasties*; Martin Barker and Julian Petley, ed., *III Effects: the Media/Violence Debate* (London: Routledge, 2001); David Kerekes and David Slater, *See No Evil: Banned Films and Video Controversy* (Manchester: Critical Vision, 2000); Tom Dewe Mathews, *Censored: The Story of Film Censorship in Britain* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1994).
- ⁵⁸ Robert Sklar, *Movie-Made America: a Social History of American Movies* (New York: Random House, 1975), p. 176. See also Thomas Doherty, *Pre-Code Hollywood*.
- ⁵⁹ Maltby in Balio, ed., *Grand Design: Hollywood as a Modern Business Enterprise, 1930-1939. Volume 5 of the History of American Cinema Series*. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1993), p. 39.
- ⁶⁰ Maltby, "Baby Face", p. 29; Jacobs, *The Wages of Sin*, p. 111. See also Jacobs, *The Wages of Sin*, p. 27-51, and Vasey, *The World According to Hollywood*, p. 107.
- ⁶¹ Brunas et al, *Universal Horrors* p. 166. See also Carlos Clarens, *An Illustrated History of the Horror Film* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1967), Ivan Butler, *Horror in the Cinema* (London: A. S. Barnes, 1970), and S. S. Prawer, *Caligari's Children: the Film as Tale of Terror* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980).
- ⁶² Skal, *The Monster Show*, p. 116, 182; Berenstein, *Attack of the Leading Ladies*, p. 15, 85.
- ⁶³ Berenstein, *Attack of the Leading Ladies*, p. 15, 84-85.
- ⁶⁴ Skal, *The Monster Show*, p. 178, 188-194.
- ⁶⁵ Quotation from Berenstein, *Attack of the Leading Ladies*, p. 87. For a typical case study, see her analysis of *Dracula's Daughter's* censorship, p. 26-27.
- ⁶⁶ For example, Skal, *The Monster Show*, p. 162-163.
- ⁶⁷ See Maltby, "The Production Code and the Hays Office," p. 64-67; Jacobs, p. 36-51, 111, 152; Vasey, p. 105-106, 112-113.
- ⁶⁸ Vasey, *The World According to Hollywood*, p. 100-107; Jacobs, *The Wages of Sin*, p. 112-114.
- ⁶⁹ Maltby, "The Production Code and the Hays Office," p. 49-51, 59-62. Vasey p. 127-130, 144-148.
- ⁷⁰ Sarah J. Smith, *Children, Cinema and Censorship: From Dracula to the Dead End Kids* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2005) p. 69-73, 113-114, 165.

- ⁷¹ William Paul, *Laughing Screaming: Modern Hollywood Horror and Comedy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), p. 6-7.
- ⁷² Stephen Prince, *Classical Film Violence: Designing and Regulating Brutality in Hollywood Cinema, 1930-1968* (London: Rutgers University Press, 2003), p.55, 60, 67-73.
- ⁷³ Prince, *Classical Film Violence*, p. 61.
- ⁷⁴ On the 'pre-Code' period, Prince, p. 22; on producers' basic opposition to the PCA, p. 73; on the aligned interests and views of different censorship bodies, p. 75-76. Regarding the latter passage, on the censorship of *The Black Cat* (which I treat from a different standpoint in Chapter Four), Prince argues that the failure of the PCA's strategy for eliminating offence to regional censorship in a key scene was not due to differences between their analysis of horror and that of regional censor boards, but a consequence of the failure of the filmmakers to heed PCA warnings.
- ⁷⁵ Berenstein, *Attack of the Leading Ladies*, p. 11-12. See also p. 162-163.
- ⁷⁶ Butler, *Horror in the Cinema*, p. 13, 15; Clarens, *An Illustrated History of the Horror Film*, p. 37, 86-87.
- ⁷⁷ Prawer, *Caligari's Children*, p. 4, 7.
- ⁷⁸ Butler, *Horror in the Cinema*, p. 20, 24; Clarens, *An Illustrated History of the Horror Film*, p. 9-59; Prawer, *Caligari's Children*, p. 8-9.
- ⁷⁹ Kim Newman, ed., *The BFI Companion to Horror* (London: British Film Institute, 1996) p. 12.
- ⁸⁰ Roy Kinnard, *Horror in Silent Films: a Filmography, 1896-1929* (London: McFarland, 1995), p. 16.
- ⁸¹ Butler, *Horror in the Cinema*, p. 19.
- ⁸² Tudor, *Monsters and Mad Scientists*, p. 24.
- ⁸³ Berenstein, *Attack of the Leading Ladies*, p. 14.
- ⁸⁴ Kendall Phillips, *Projected Fears: Horror Films and American Culture* (London: Praeger, 2005), p. 21.
- ⁸⁵ Steffen Hantke, ed., *Horror Film: Creating and Marketing Fear* (Jackson, MS: University of Mississippi Press, 2004), p. xi.
- ⁸⁶ Casper Tybjerg, "Shadow-Souls and Strange Adventures: Horror and the Supernatural in European Silent Film" in Stephen Prince, ed., *The Horror Film* (London: Rutgers University Press, 2004), p. 16.
- ⁸⁷ Tybjerg, "Shadow-Souls and Strange Adventures", p. 16.
- ⁸⁸ Tybjerg "Shadow-Souls and Strange Adventures", p. 16.
- ⁸⁹ Tybjerg "Shadow-Souls and Strange Adventures", p. 17-24.
- ⁹⁰ Ian Conrich, "Before Sound: Universal, Silent Cinema and the Last of the Horror-Spectaculars" in Prince, ed., *The Horror Film*, p. 44, 48-49.
- ⁹¹ Hantke, *Horror Film*, p. xi.
- ⁹² Thomas Elsaesser, "Germany: the Weimar Years" in Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, ed. *The Oxford History of World Cinema* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 139-149.
- ⁹³ Review of *Phantom of the Opera*, *Harrison's Reports*, 21 August 1943.
- ⁹⁴ Altman, *Film/Genre*, p. 78-79.
- ⁹⁵ Michael F. Blake, *Lon Chaney: the Man Behind the Thousand Faces* (Vestal, N.Y., Vestal Press, 1993), p. 108.
- ⁹⁶ Programme in clippings file for *Phantom of the Opera*, Margaret Herrick Library.
- ⁹⁷ Review of *Phantom of the Opera*, *New York Times*, September 7, 1925.
- ⁹⁸ Review of *The Blackbird*, *Variety*, February 3, 1926.
- ⁹⁹ Butler, *Horror in the Cinema*, p. 20, 24; Clarens, *An Illustrated History of the Horror Film*, p. 9-59; Prawer, *Caligari's Children*, p. 8-9.
- ¹⁰⁰ Review of *London After Midnight*, *Variety*, 14 December 1927.
- ¹⁰¹ Review of *Mark of the Vampire*, *Film Daily*, April 6, 1935.
- ¹⁰² Press book for *London After Midnight* reprinted in Philip J. Riley, ed., *London After Midnight*, (London: Cornwall Books, 1985) p. 88.
- ¹⁰³ Martin F. Norden, *The Cinema of Isolation: A History of Physical Disability in the Movies* (New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1994).

- ¹⁰⁴ Gaylyn Studlar, *This Mad Masquerade: Stardom and Masculinity in the Jazz Age* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).
- ¹⁰⁵ Hills, *The Pleasures of Horror*, p. 6.
- ¹⁰⁶ Noël Carroll, *The Philosophy of Horror: or, Paradoxes of the Heart* (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 13, 24, 28.
- ¹⁰⁷ Hills, *The Pleasures of Horror*, p. 15-16.
- ¹⁰⁸ Hills, *The Pleasures of Horror*, p. 19-21, 24-26.
- ¹⁰⁹ Jonathan Lake Crane, *Terror and Everyday Life: Singular Moments in the History of the Horror Film* (Thousand Oaks, C.A., Sage, 1994), p. 29.
- ¹¹⁰ Berenstein, *Attack of the Leading Ladies*, p. 18, 20-21.
- ¹¹¹ Hills, *The Pleasures of Horror*, p. 2.
- ¹¹² Hills, *The Pleasures of Horror*, p. 24.
- ¹¹³ W. H. Rockett, *Devouring Whirlwind: Terror and Transcendence in the Cinema of Cruelty* (Westport, C.T.: Greenwood Press, 1988), p. 6, 7, 17, 47-48.
- ¹¹⁴ Rockett, *Devouring Whirlwind*, p. 44-48.
- ¹¹⁵ Hills, *The Pleasures of Horror*; Ron Tamborini and James B. Weaver III's *Horror Films: Current Research on Audience Preferences and Reactions* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1995); Jancovich, "A Real Shocker"; Jancovich, "Genre and the Audience: genre classifications and cultural distinctions in the mediation of *Silence of the Lambs*", in Melvyn Stokes and Richard Maltby, eds., *Hollywood Spectatorship: Changing Perceptions of Cinema Audiences* (London: British Film Institute, 2001); Brigid Cherry, "Refusing to Refuse to Look: Female viewers of the horror film" in Melvyn Stokes and Richard Maltby, eds., *Identifying Hollywood's Audiences* (London: British Film Institute, 1999).
- ¹¹⁶ For a full discussion of these issues, see Chapters Two and Four of this thesis.
- ¹¹⁷ Hills, *The Pleasures of Horror*, p. 7.

Notes to Chapter Two

- ¹ Altman, *Film/Genre*, p. 52. For a more detailed explanation, see pp. 57-68.
- ² PCA Code files for *Frankenstein* and *Murders in the Rue Morgue*, Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, Los Angeles.
- ³ According to the film's PCA file held at the Margaret Herrick Library, the first yellow script of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* was submitted to the Studio Relations Committee on 20 July 1931, suggesting that Paramount would have been planning the film for at least a few weeks. Browning informed MGM that he wished to develop *Freaks* on 8 July 1931, according to Elias Savada and David J. Skal, *Dark Carnival: The Secret World of Tod Browning, Hollywood's Master of the Macabre* (New York: Anchor Books, 1995), p. 161.
- ⁴ Review of *Dracula*, *Variety*, February 18 1931.
- ⁵ Review of *Frankenstein*, *Variety*, December 8 1931.
- ⁶ *Dracula* press book, reprinted in Riley ed., *Dracula*.
- ⁷ *Frankenstein* press book, reprinted in Riley ed., *Frankenstein*.
- ⁸ Review of *Frankenstein*, *Variety*, December 8 1931.
- ⁹ *Hollywood Reporter*, Nov 3, 1931.
- ¹⁰ Review of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, *Motion Picture Herald*, 26 December 1931.
- ¹¹ Review of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, *Variety*, 5 January 1932.
- ¹² "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde", anonymous review, 1932. *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* clipping file, Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, Los Angeles.
- ¹³ Altman, *Film/Genre*, p. 52, 57-68.
- ¹⁴ Review of *Dracula*, *Variety*, February 18 1931.
- ¹⁵ Review of *Dracula*, *Motion Picture Herald*, January 3, 1931, p. 74.
- ¹⁶ "For Your Program", *Dracula* press book, reprinted in Riley ed., *Dracula*.
- ¹⁷ Altman, *Film/Genre*, p. 54, 58-59, 104.
- ¹⁸ *Dracula* press book, reprinted in Riley ed., *Dracula*.
- ¹⁹ *Dracula* press book, reprinted in Riley ed., *Dracula*.
- ²⁰ *Frankenstein* press book, reprinted in Riley ed., *Frankenstein*.
- ²¹ *Frankenstein* press book, reprinted in Riley ed., *Frankenstein*.
- ²² *Frankenstein* press book, reprinted in Riley ed., *Frankenstein*.
- ²³ Review of *Frankenstein*, *Hollywood Reporter*, November 3 1931.
- ²⁴ Review of *Dracula*, *Variety*, February 18 1931.
- ²⁵ Review of *Frankenstein*, *Variety*, December 8 1931.
- ²⁶ Review of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, January 5 1932.
- ²⁷ *Variety*, April 8 1931, p. 4.
- ²⁸ Review of *Dracula*, *Motion Picture Herald*, 3 January 1931.
- ²⁹ Review of *Dracula*, *Variety*, February 18 1931.
- ³⁰ See the chapter "Horror for Sale: the Marketing and Reception of Classic Horror Cinema", in Berenstein, *Attack of the Leading Ladies*, p. 60-87.
- ³¹ Review of *Frankenstein*, *Hollywood Reporter*, 3 November, 1931.
- ³² Review of *Frankenstein*, *Variety*, December 8 1931.
- ³³ *Frankenstein* press book reprinted in Riley ed., *Frankenstein*.
- ³⁴ *Frankenstein* press book reprinted in Riley ed., *Frankenstein*.
- ³⁵ "Dracula" is Crowning Effort of Director Browning's Career", *Frankenstein* press book.
- ³⁶ untitled short article, *Dracula* press book.
- ³⁷ "'Dracula', Greatest Film Made By Director of Chaney Pictures"; "'Mike' Perfected For Talking Films", *Dracula* press book.
- ³⁸ *Frankenstein* press book reprinted in Riley ed., *Frankenstein*.
- ³⁹ Review of *Phantom of the Opera*, *Variety*, September 9, 1925.
- ⁴⁰ Blake, *Lon Chaney*, p. 345.
- ⁴¹ Gaylyn Studlar, *This Mad Masquerade*, p. 210.
- ⁴² Review of *Phantom of the Opera*, *Variety*, September 9, 1925.
- ⁴³ Review of *The Unknown*, *New York Telegram*, June 13, 1927.
- ⁴⁴ Blake, *Lon Chaney*, p. 121.

- ⁴⁵ E. J. Mannix Ledgers, Margaret Herrick Library, cited in Skal, *Dark Carnival*, p. 105, 118. *The Blackbird, The Unknown* figures from Blake, *Lon Chaney*, p. 347.
- ⁴⁶ *New York Herald Tribune*, June 19, 1927.
- ⁴⁷ *Harrison's Reports*, June 25, 1927.
- ⁴⁸ "For the Program", *Frankenstein* press book.
- ⁴⁹ *Frankenstein* press book, reprinted in Riley, ed., *Frankenstein*.
- ⁵⁰ *Frankenstein* press book, reprinted in Riley, ed., *Frankenstein*.
- ⁵¹ "What does a monster think about?", *Frankenstein* press book, reprinted in Riley, ed., *Frankenstein*.
- ⁵² Review of *Frankenstein*, *Motion Picture Herald*, February 8, 1932.
- ⁵³ *Frankenstein*, dir. James Whale, 1931. DVD, Universal, 2002.
- ⁵⁴ *Dracula*, dir. Tod Browning, 1931. DVD, Universal, 2002.
- ⁵⁵ Balio, *Grand Design*, p. 28.
- ⁵⁶ Press book for *The Mask of Fu Manchu* (MGM, 1932), in clippings file for *The Mask of Fu Manchu*, Margaret Herrick Library.
- ⁵⁷ Manuals from Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Production Material Collection, Margaret Herrick Library. *Mad Love* changed its title from *The Hands of Orlac* at the last minute.
- ⁵⁸ Box office reports, *Variety*, May 15, 1935, p. 9.
- ⁵⁹ Box office reports, *Variety*, August 2, 1932, p. 8.
- ⁶⁰ Such devices were very common, but there are many examples from the press books held in the clippings files at the Margaret Herrick Library. The fake kidnapping note is suggested in the press book for *Mark of the Vampire*, and the other examples are taken from the press books for *Scarface*, *Dracula*, and *Mad Love*.
- ⁶¹ *New York Times*, July 28, 1935, in PCA case file for *Mark of the Vampire*, Margaret Herrick Library.
- ⁶² Press book for *Mark of the Vampire*, PCA case file for *Mark of the Vampire*, Margaret Herrick Library.
- ⁶³ Box office reports, *Variety*, May 1, 1935, p. 9.
- ⁶⁴ Box office reports, *Variety*, February 9, 1932, p. 9.
- ⁶⁵ Resumé for February 27 1932, PCA case file for *Murders in the Rue Morgue*, Margaret Herrick Library.

Notes to Chapter Three

¹ For a closer explanation of censorship and controversy in relation to some later horror films, television broadcasts, and cycles, see Martin Barker, *The Video Nasties: Freedom and Censorship in the Media*; Martin Barker and Julian Petley, ed., *III Effects: the Media/Violence Debate* (London: Routledge, 2001); Martin Barker, Jane Arthurs and Ramaswami Harindranath, *The Crash Controversy: Censorship Campaigns and Film Reception* (London: Wallflower Press, 2001); Gregory A. Waller, "Made-for-television horror films", p. 145-161, in Gregory A. Waller, ed., *American Horrors: Essays on the Modern American Horror Film* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987).

² Production Code reprinted in Doherty, *Pre-Code Hollywood*, p. 355. The reference is to "impure love", which "must not be presented in such a way as to arouse passion or morbid curiosity on the part of the audience." "Morbid curiosity" seems here to be used in its conventional sense, to describe a dynamic of attraction and repulsion producing unhealthy curiosity.

³ Correspondence and records dated between February 20 1931 and April 17 1931, PCA case file for *Dracula*.

⁴ Local censorship record dated April 7 1931, PCA case file for *Dracula*.

⁵ Letter from E.M. Asher of Universal to Colonel Jason Joy, dated June 26 1930. Letter from Leon Abrams of Universal to Joy, July 3 1930; memo from E. M. Asher to Joy, September 8 1930; letter from Joy to Carl Laemmle Jr., September 13 1930; letter from Laemmle to Colonel Joy, September 19 1930, PCA case file for *Dracula*.

⁶ Letter from Joy to Laemmle, January 9 1931, PCA case file for *Dracula*.

⁷ Comments of previewers on *Dracula*, PCA case file for *Dracula*. Of the five comments, only the last two are attributed by name: respectively, to Mrs Leo B. Hedges and to Marjorie Ross Davis, P.T.A. Report Chairman.

⁸ Synopsis dated January 14 1931, by James Fisher, and trailer review dated January 28 1931, by Lamar Trotti, PCA case file for *Dracula*.

⁹ Maltby, "The Production Code and the Hays Office", p. 53.

¹⁰ Letter from Joy to Laemmle, August 18 1931, PCA case file for *Frankenstein*.

¹¹ Letter from Fred W. Beeton to Laemmle, November 2 1931, PCA case file for *Frankenstein*.

¹² Regional censor notes, dated from December 2 1931 to March 9 1932, PCA case file for *Frankenstein*.

¹³ The cuts include most of the film's important, and affecting scenes.

¹⁴ Letter from T. B. Fithian to Joy, December 10 1931; resumé from Joy dated December 11 1931; resumé (unsigned) from Joseph Breen dated December 17 1931, PCA case file for *Frankenstein*.

¹⁵ "Kans. Women Censors Ruin 'Frankenstein.'", *Variety*, 15th December 1931, p. 5.

¹⁶ *Frankenstein*, dir. James Whale, 1931. DVD, Universal, 2002.

¹⁷ Fithian to Joy, April 21 1932, PCA case file for *Frankenstein*.

¹⁸ Letter from John V. Wilson, pp. Joy, to B. P. Schulberg at Paramount, August 10 1931, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* PCA case file.

¹⁹ Letter from Joy to Schulberg, December 1 1931, PCA case file for *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*.

²⁰ Dated January 4 1932, PCA case file for *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*.

²¹ Letter, Joy to Hays, 5/12/31. PCA Code file for *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. *Almost Married* was in fact not quite a horror film but a mystery thriller. The second Paramount horror film mentioned here is almost undoubtedly *Island of Lost Souls*.

²² Letter Joy to Hays, January 11 1932, PCA case file for *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*.

²³ McDermott Says, 'Make 'Em Twice, If It Clicks There'll Be a Cycle Anyway"', *Variety*, July 19 1932, p. 2.

²⁴ Skal and Savada, *Dark Carnival*, p. 181.

²⁵ Bob Thomas, *Thalberg: Life and Legend* (New York: Doubleday, 1969), p. 186.

²⁶ For example, see "None of Us: Ambiguity as Moral Discourse in Tod Browning's *Freaks*" – Méira Cook and "The Horror of Becoming "One of Us: Tod Browning's *Freaks* and Disability", both in Anthony Enns and Christopher R. Smit, ed., *Screening Disability: Essays on Cinema and Disability* (Oxford: University Press of America, 2001).

²⁷ Skal, *The Monster Show*, p. 19.

- ²⁸ Review of *Freaks*, *Variety*, July 12, 1932. Italics are mine.
- ²⁹ "Believe Metro May Call in 'Freaks'", *Variety*, March 15, 1932. p. 4.
- ³⁰ Box office reports, *Variety*, Feb 23 1932, p. 8-10.
- ³¹ Box office reports, *Variety*, Mar 15 1932, p. 14.
- ³² Box office reports, *Variety*, April 12, 1932, p.9; July 26 1932, p.7.
- ³³ Skal and Savada, *Dark Carnival*, p. 181.
- ³⁴ Review in *Time* magazine, April 18, 1932, quoted in Skal and Savada, *Dark Carnival*, p.180.
- ³⁵ Louella Parsons, review of *Freaks*, *Los Angeles Examiner*, February 13 1932.
- ³⁶ Review of *Freaks*, *Atlanta Journal*, February 19, 1932. Quoted in Skal and Savada, *Dark Carnival*, p. 178.
- ³⁷ Review of *Freaks*, *Kansas City (Missouri) Star*, quoted in Skal and Savada, *Dark Carnival*, p. 178.
- ³⁸ Skal and Savada, *Dark Carnival*, p. 179-80.
- ³⁹ Review of *Freaks*, *Motion Picture Herald*, Jan 23, 1932, p. 46.
- ⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 46.
- ⁴¹ Review of *Freaks*, *Variety*, July 12, 1932.
- ⁴² Review of *Freaks* in *Boston Evening Transcript*, February 20, 1932. Quoted in Skal and Savada, *Dark Carnival*, p. 179.
- ⁴³ Joy to Hays, January 11 1932, PCA case file for *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*.
- ⁴⁴ Local censor board reports dated from February 23 1932 to March 22 1932; correspondence between SRC, Universal Canada, the MPPDA's Canadian branch, and various Canadian censor boards, all dated between February 27 1932 and March 29 1932, PCA case file for *Murders in the Rue Morgue*.
- ⁴⁵ Undated studio "Highlights" sheets promoting *Murders in the Rue Morgue* to press and exhibitors, PCA case file for *Murders in the Rue Morgue*.
- ⁴⁶ Synopsis, July 28 1932; telegram from Wingate to Hart, January 27 1933; local censor records dated July 25 1932 – September 28 1932, PCA case file for *White Zombie*.
- ⁴⁷ Letter from Lamar Trotti to Jack Warner, May 16 1932, PCA case file for *Doctor X*.
- ⁴⁸ Local censor reports, dated September 14 1932 (Britain) and September 26 1932 (Ontario), PCA Code file for *Doctor X*.
- ⁴⁹ Letter from Lamar Trotti to Laemmle, dated April 16 1932, PCA Code file for *The Invisible Man*.
- ⁵⁰ Letters from James Wingate to Laemmle, dated January 5 1933 and June 15 1933, PCA case file for *The Invisible Man*.
- ⁵¹ Local censor reports dated between November 16 1933 and December 22 1933, PCA case file for *The Invisible Man*.
- ⁵² Two letters, from Wingate to Thalberg and to William Orr, dated October 27 1932, PCA case file for *The Mask of Fu Manchu*.
- ⁵³ Local censorship notes dated between November 16 1932 and March 1 1933, PCA case file for *The Mask of Fu Manchu*.
- ⁵⁴ Preview by Maude Latham, dated November 9 1932, PCA case file for *The Mask of Fu Manchu*.
- ⁵⁵ Local censor reports dated between March 31 and May 5 1933, PCA case file for *Murders in the Zoo*.
- ⁵⁶ Local censor reports dated February 11 1933 and May 25 1933, PCA case file for *Mystery of the Wax Museum*.
- ⁵⁷ Synopsis, dated February 6 1933, PCA case file for *Mystery of the Wax Museum*.
- ⁵⁸ Letter from Wingate to William Orr of MGM, October 27 1932, PCA case file for *The Mask of Fu Manchu*.
- ⁵⁹ Report from Wingate to Hays, October 27 1932, PCA case file for *The Mask of Fu Manchu*.
- ⁶⁰ Vasey, *The World According to Hollywood*, p. 113.
- ⁶¹ Letter from Joy to Laemmle, January 8 1932, and reply from Laemmle to Joy, January 14 1932 PCA case file for *Murders in the Rue Morgue*.
- ⁶² Letter from Joy to Zanuck, March 21 1932, PCA case file for *Doctor X*.
- ⁶³ Letter from John V. Wilson to Anne Bagley, April 11 1932, PCA case file for *Murders in the Rue Morgue*.
- ⁶⁴ Report from Wingate to Hays, dated January 6 1933, PCA case file for *The Invisible Man*.

⁶⁵ Letter from Wingate to Sydney Singerman, October 20 1933, PCA case file for *The Invisible Man*.

⁶⁶ Letter from Irwin Esmond to Wingate, November 11 1932, PCA case file for *The Mask of Fu Manchu*.

Notes to Chapter Four

- ¹ Jacobs, *The Wages of Sin*, Preface, xi.
- ² Maltby, "The Production Code and the Hays Office", p. 64-65.
- ³ Letter from Breen to Harry Zehner of Universal, February 26, 1934, PCA case file for *The Black Cat*.
- ⁴ Memo from Auster to Breen, February 28, 1934, PCA case file for *The Black Cat*.
- ⁵ Letter from Breen to Zehner, April 2, 1934, PCA case file for *The Black Cat*.
- ⁶ New York, Kansas, Massachusetts and Pennsylvania passed the film without eliminations. Local censorship reports, dated from May 27 1934 to October 20 1934, PCA case file for *The Black Cat*.
- ⁷ *Murders on the Rue Morgue* PCA Case file.
- ⁸ Prince, *Classical Film Violence*, p. 85.
- ⁹ Prince, *Classical Film Violence*, p. 54-55, 60-61.
- ¹⁰ Letter from Breen to Zehner, PCA case file for *Werewolf of London*.
- ¹¹ Letter from Wingate to Zehner, July 28 1933, and letter from Breen to Zehner, July 24 1934, PCA case file for *Bride of Frankenstein*.
- ¹² Letter from Breen to Zehner, December 5 1934, PCA case file for *Bride of Frankenstein*.
- ¹³ Letter from James Whale to Breen, December 10 1934, PCA case file for *Bride of Frankenstein*.
- ¹⁴ Letter from Breen to Whale dated December 11 1935, and internal memo dated February 9 1935, in PCA case file for *Bride of Frankenstein*.
- ¹⁵ Letter from Breen to Zehner, March 23 1935, PCA case file for *Bride of Frankenstein*.
- ¹⁶ Letter from Breen to Zehner, April 15 1935, PCA case file for *Bride of Frankenstein*.
- ¹⁷ Box office reports, *Variety*, May 1, 1935, p. 9.
- ¹⁸ Local censorship reports, dated between June 13 1935 and July 17 1935, PCA case file for *Bride of Frankenstein*.
- ¹⁹ Letter from Breen to Hays, May 8 1935, PCA case file for *Bride of Frankenstein*.
- ²⁰ Maltby, "The Production Code and the Hays Office",.
- ²¹ Maltby, "The Production Code and the Hays Office",.
- ²² Maltby, "The Production Code and the Hays Office",.
- ²³ For more detailed discussion, see Martin Barker, *The Video Nasties: Freedom and Censorship in the Media*; Julian Petley, ed., *Ill Effects: the Media/Violence Debate*; David Kerekes and David Slater, *See No Evil: Banned Films and Video Controversy*; Tom Dewe Mathews, *Censored: The Story of Film Censorship in Britain* (Chatto and Windus, 1994).
- ²⁴ Jowett et al, *Children and the Movies*, p. 5.
- ²⁵ Jowett et al, *Children and the Movies*, p. 5-6.
- ²⁶ Jowett et al, *Children and the Movies*, p. 7.
- ²⁷ Herbert Blumer, *Movies and Conduct* (New York, Macmillan, 1933), p. 1-2.
- ²⁸ Blumer, *Movies and Conduct*, p. 25.
- ²⁹ Blumer, *Movies and Conduct*, p. 87.
- ³⁰ Blumer, *Movies and Conduct*, p. 75.
- ³¹ Blumer, *Movies and Conduct*, p. 89.
- ³² Jowett, et al, *Children and the Movies*, p. 126-128.
- ³³ Blumer, *Movies and Conduct*, p. 90-91.
- ³⁴ Henry James Forman, *Our Movie Made Children* (New York: Macmillan, 1933), p. 105.
- ³⁵ Forman, *Our Movie Made Children* p. 106.
- ³⁶ Forman, *Our Movie Made Children* p. 107.
- ³⁷ Forman, *Our Movie Made Children* p. 110.
- ³⁸ Forman, *Our Movie Made Children* p. 111.
- ³⁹ Jacobs, *The Wages of Sin*, p. 107.
- ⁴⁰ Maltby, "The Production Code and the Hays Office", p. 56.
- ⁴¹ Jacobs, p. 107.
- ⁴² Letter from Joseph Breen to MGM, December 18 1934, PCA case file for *Mark of the Vampire*.
- ⁴³ Correspondence between Joseph Breen and Harry Zehner, and memorandum of meeting, January 9-15 1935, PCA case file for *Werewolf of London*.

⁴⁴ Correspondence between Breen and Zehner, dated March 7-14 1935, PCA case file for *The Raven*.

⁴⁵ Letter from Breen to Zehner, January 15 1935, PCA case file for *Werewolf of London*.

⁴⁶ Memorandum of conference January 15 1935, PCA case file for *Werewolf of London*.

⁴⁷ Robert Harris used a similarly, wonderfully convoluted argument about a contentious scene where the werewolf attacks a short-skirted girl under a streetlamp. In reference to the PCA's contention, at the conference, that the girl was a prostitute and the scene was unacceptable, Harris explains:

Mr. Walker, the director, has promised to shoot this scene with his usual taste and discretion. The writer further explained that the girl, being of the lower class, is wearing a skirt which is not too lengthy, possibly having shrunk when she herself washed it, being quite without money to send it to be regularly cleaned, and carried a handbag such as is carried by millions of respectable women today, large enough to hold the miscellaneous vanities which women carry today.

Breen's response was dryly sceptical.

⁴⁸ Memorandum of telephone call from Stanley Bergerman, February 7 1935, PCA case file for *Werewolf of London*.

⁴⁹ Letter from Zehner to Breen, February 9 1935, PCA case file for *Werewolf of London*.

⁵⁰ Letter from Breen to Zehner, February 12 1935, and local censorship records dated between May 21 1935 and September 6 1935, PCA case file for *Werewolf of London*.

⁵¹ Letter from Breen to Zehner, dated March 20 1935, PCA case file for *The Raven*.

⁵² Letter from Breen to Zehner, dated March 26 1935, PCA case file for *The Raven*.

⁵³ Local censorship reports dated from June 19 – September 28 1935, PCA case file for *The Raven*.

⁵⁴ Edmund G. Bansak, *Fearing the Dark: The Val Lewton Career* (London: McFarland, 1995), p. 112.

⁵⁵ Brunas *et al*, *Universal Horrors*, p. 92.

⁵⁶ Skal, *The Monster Show*, p. 195, 201.

⁵⁷ Berenstein, *Attack of the Leading Ladies*, p. 15.

⁵⁸ Altman, *Film/Genre*, p. 95; Berenstein, *Attack of the Leading Ladies*, p. 15; Skal, *The Monster Show*, p. 195, 205.

⁵⁹ Schatz, *The Genius of the System*, p. 235; James Curtis, *James Whale: A New World of Gods and Monsters* (London: Faber and Faber, 1998), p. 267-276.

⁶⁰ *Los Angeles Daily News*, June 17, 1931, quoted in Curtis, *James Whale*, p. 291.

⁶¹ Article from *Michigan City News*, August 23 1935, PCA case file for *The Raven*.

⁶² Berenstein, *Attack of the Leading Ladies*, p. 15.

⁶³ "Horror Films Taken Off U Sked", *Variety*, May 6, 1936.

⁶⁴ Breen to Zehner, April 24, 1936.

⁶⁵ Breen to Zehner, April 24, 1936.

⁶⁶ Breen to Warner, September 26 1935, PCA case file for *The Walking Dead*.

⁶⁷ Vasey, *The World According to Hollywood*, p. 99.

⁶⁸ James C. Robertson, *The British Board of Film Censors: film censorship in Britain, 1896-1950* (London: Croom Helm, 1985), p. 56.

⁶⁹ Smith, *Children, Cinema and Censorship*, p. 56, 70-71.

⁷⁰ Smith, *Children, Cinema and Censorship*, p. 59.

⁷¹ Smith, *Children, Cinema and Censorship*, p. 59, 183.

⁷² James C. Robertson, *The Hidden cinema: British film censorship in action 1913-75* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 66.

⁷³ Smith, *Children, Cinema and Censorship*, p. 72.

⁷⁴ Smith, *Children, Cinema and Censorship*, p. 71-72.

⁷⁵ For a fuller account of the PCA's dealings with studios over international issues, see Vasey, *The World According to Hollywood*, p. 127-157.

⁷⁶ Letter from Breen to Zehner, January 15 1936, PCA case file for *Dracula's Daughter*.

⁷⁷ Internal memo dated 13 September 1935, PCA case file for *Dracula's Daughter*.

- ⁷⁸ Skal, *The Monster Show*, p. 199.
- ⁷⁹ Letter from Breen to Zehner, October 23 1935, PCA case file for *Dracula's Daughter*.
- ⁸⁰ Letter from Breen to Zehner, January 24 1936, PCA case file for *Dracula's Daughter*.
- ⁸¹ Letter from Breen to Zehner, February 4 1936, PCA case file for *Dracula's Daughter*.
- ⁸² Letter from Breen to Warner, September 26 1935, PCA case file for *The Walking Dead*.
- ⁸³ Letter from Breen to Warner, November 5 1935, and December 2 1935, PCA case file for *The Walking Dead*.
- ⁸⁴ Telegram from Dave Blum to Samuel Marx of MGM, November 11 1935, PCA case file for *The Devil Doll*.
- ⁸⁵ Various script retake drafts, dated from January 17 1935 to May 28 1936, file for *The Devil Doll*, MGM Script Collection.
- ⁸⁶ Reviews from the *New York Evening Journal* and *New York Sun* quoted in Bret Wood, "The Witch, the Devil and the Code: a horror story of Hollywood in the Golden Age", *Film Comment* 28 (November/December 1992), p. 52-56.
- ⁸⁷ Review of *The Devil Doll*, *Variety*, August 12, 1936.
- ⁸⁸ Regional censor reports for *The Walking Dead*, dated February 27 to May 21 1936; *Dracula's Daughter*, dated May 28 to June 25, 193; and *The Devil Doll*, dated June 26 to August 31, 1936, in from PCA case files for above films.
- ⁸⁹ Manual, file for *The Devil Doll*, MGM Production Material Collection.
- ⁹⁰ Press book for *The Walking Dead*, Warner Bros. archive.
- ⁹¹ Reviews of *The Walking Dead*, *New York Morning Telegraph*, March 1, 1936, and *New York Times*, March 2, 1936.

Notes to Chapter Five

¹ Skal, *The Monster Show*, p. 209 – 213.

² Tudor, *Monsters and Mad Scientists*, p. 24.

³ Tudor, *Monsters and Mad Scientists*, p. 33-34.

⁴ Tudor, *Monsters and Mad Scientists*, p. 34.

⁵ Bansak, *Fearing the Dark*, p. 149.

⁶ Maltby, "The Production Code and the Hays Office," p. 37-38.

⁷ Maltby, "The Production Code and the Hays Office," p. 70. See also "Regulating the Screen: The Office of War Information and the Production Code Administration", Clayton R. Koppes, in Thomas Schatz, *Boom and Bust: American Cinema in the 1940s* (London: University of California Press, 1999)

⁸ Skal, *The Monster Show*, p. 209; Brunas et al, *Universal Horrors*, p. 178.

⁹ Brunas et al, *Universal Horrors*, p. 178

¹⁰ Doherty, *Pre-Code Hollywood*, p. 365. The text of this amendment is taken from the edition of the Code published in *Hollywood's Movie Commandments* by Olga Martin, Breen's former secretary.

¹¹ Letter from Breen to Zehner, March 22 1938, PCA case file for *The Invisible Man Returns*.

¹² Letter from Breen to Pivar, June 3 1939, PCA case file for *The Invisible Man Returns*.

¹³ Letters from Breen to Harry Cohn, September 30, October 5 and October 25 1938, and May 23 1939, PCA case file for *The Man They Could Not Hang*.

¹⁴ Letter from Breen to Francis Harmon, March 9 1938, letter from Harmon to J.C. Miller of Universal, NYC, March 17 1938, PCA case file for *Dracula*.

¹⁵ Box office reports from *Variety* October 9 1938, p. 11; October 19 1938, p. 9; October 26 1938, p. 8.

¹⁶ Telegram from Breen to "Censofilm, London", November 3 1938; telegram from Brooke Wilkinson to Breen, November 4 1938, in PCA case file for *Son of Frankenstein*.

¹⁷ Letter from Breen to Cliff Work, President of Universal, November 7 1938; letter from Breen to B. B. Kahane at Columbia, November 7 1938, PCA case file for *Son of Frankenstein*.

¹⁸ Letter from Work to Breen, Nov 12, 1938, PCA case file for *Son of Frankenstein*.

¹⁹ Forwarded copy of Vandervoort correspondence quoted above, from Breen to Cliff Work, November 26 1938, PCA case file for *Son of Frankenstein*. A note on the file says: "This letter also sent to: Bryan Foy, Hal Wallis, Colonel Joy, Al Block, J. R. McDonough, Al Cohen, Luigi Luraschi, Cliff Work" – showing how widely the PCA made use of the letters.

²⁰ Letter from Katherine J. Vandervoort, Director of Attendance, White Plains Public Schools, White Plains, New York, to Production Code Administration, November 18 1938; enclosed letter from Vandervoort to Judge George W. Smyth, Westchester County Children's Court, White Plains, New York, February 21 1938; letter from Vandervoort to Carl E. Milliken, MPPDA, New York City, November 18 1938; letter from Breen to Vandervoort, November 26 1938, PCA case file for *Dracula*.

²¹ Letter from Katherine J. Vandervoort, Director of Attendance, White Plains Public Schools, White Plains, New York, to Production Code Administration, November 18 1938; enclosed letter from Vandervoort to Judge George W. Smyth, Westchester County Children's Court, White Plains, New York, February 21 1938; letter from Vandervoort to Carl E. Milliken, MPPDA, New York City, November 18 1938; letter from Breen to Vandervoort, November 26 1938, PCA case file for *Dracula*.

²² Letter from Katherine J. Vandervoort, Director of Attendance, White Plains Public Schools, White Plains, New York, to Production Code Administration, November 18 1938; enclosed letter from Vandervoort to Judge George W. Smyth, Westchester County Children's Court, White Plains, New York, February 21 1938; letter from Vandervoort to Carl E. Milliken, MPPDA, New York City, November 18 1938; letter from Breen to Vandervoort, November 26 1938, PCA case file for *Dracula*.

²³ Letter from Breen to Vandervoort, November 26 1938.

²⁴ Letter from Breen to Maurice Pivar at Universal, 27 October 1938, PCA case file for *Son of Frankenstein*.

²⁵ Letter from Breen to Francis S. Harmon at the MPPDA, Jan 9 1939, PCA case file for *Son of Frankenstein*.

²⁶ Local censorship reports dated between January 13 and March 12 1939, PCA case file for *Son of Frankenstein*.

- ²⁷ Advertisement, *Variety*, January 23 1939, p. 20. Box office reports, *Variety*, February 1 1939, p. 7.
- ²⁸ 1939 article, *Look* magazine, cited in Skal, *The Monster Show*, p. 209.
- ²⁹ Letter from Breen to Francis S. Harmon at the MPPDA, Jan 9 1939, PCA case file for *Son of Frankenstein*.
- ³⁰ Hills, *The Pleasures of Horror*, p. 24-25.
- ³¹ Review of *Son of Frankenstein*, *Film Daily*, January 31 1939.
- ³² Review of *Hound of the Baskervilles*, *Variety*, March 29 1939.
- ³³ Review of *Man Made Monster*, *Hollywood Reporter*, March 24 1941.
- ³⁴ Review of *The Invisible Man Returns*, *Variety*, January 10 1940.
- ³⁵ Review of *Son of Frankenstein*, *Film Daily*, January 31 1939.
- ³⁶ Letter from Breen to Pivar, June 3 1939, PCA case file for *The Invisible Man Returns*. Additional examples: letter from Breen to Cohn, September 30, and October 25 1938, and June 20, 1939, PCA case file for *The Man They Could Not Hang*, letter from Breen to Warner, May 24 1939, PCA case file for *The Return of Doctor X*.
- ³⁷ PCA case files for *The Man They Could Not Hang*, *The Return of Doctor X*, *The Invisible Man Returns*, *Tower of London*, and *The Mummy's Hand*.
- ³⁸ Review of *The Human Monster* (filmed as *Dark Eyes of London*), *Variety*, March 27 1940.
- ³⁹ Maltby, "The Production Code and the Hays Office," p. 37-38.
- ⁴⁰ Press book, *The Devil Doll*, MGM files.
- ⁴¹ Letter from Breen to Cohn, October 5 1938, PCA case file for *The Man They Could Not Hang*.
- ⁴² Letter from Breen to Harry Cohn of Columbia, October 5 1938, PCA case file for *The Man They Could Not Hang*.
- ⁴³ Studio synopsis, undated, PCA case file for *The Return of Doctor X*.
- ⁴⁴ Breen to Warner, May 24, 1939, PCA case file for *The Return of Doctor X*.
- ⁴⁵ Official synopsis and PCA Code certificate, July 28 1939, PCA case file for *The Return of Doctor X*.
- ⁴⁶ Letter from Breen to Pivar, November 23 1940, PCA case file for *Man Made Monster*.
- ⁴⁷ Breen to Pivar, December 2, 1940, PCA case file for *Man Made Monster*.
- ⁴⁸ Local censor reports from PCA case files for *The Invisible Man Returns*, dated from January 19 1939 to January 31 1939; *The Man They Could Not Hang*, dated from August 25 1939 to December 18 1939; and *The Return of Doctor X*, dated from October 31 to November 30 1940.
- ⁴⁹ Local censor reports from PCA case file for *Tower of London*, dated from November 17 1939 to December 15 1939.
- ⁵⁰ Local censor reports from PCA case file for *The Mummy's Hand*, dated from August 30 to October 31 1940.
- ⁵¹ Local censor reports from PCA case file for *Man Made Monster*, dated from March 14 1941 to November 7 1941.
- ⁵² Local censor reports, Dec 12 1941-April 23 1942, in PCA Code file for *The Wolf Man*.
- ⁵³ Reviews of *The Mummy's Hand* in *Hollywood Reporter*, August 23 1940; *Variety*, September 25 1940; *New York Times*, September 20 1940; review of *Ghost of Frankenstein* in *Variety*, March 2 1942; review of *The Wolf Man* in *Motion Picture Herald*, December 13 1941.
- ⁵⁴ Review of *The Return of Doctor X*, *Variety*, November 1939.
- ⁵⁵ Review of *Son of Frankenstein*, *New York Times*, June 17 1939.
- ⁵⁶ Breen to Brooke Wilkinson, November 7 1938, PCA case file for *Son of Frankenstein*.
- ⁵⁷ Schatz, *The Genius of the System*, p. 340.
- ⁵⁸ Production report on *The Gorilla*, *Motion Picture Herald*, April 15 1939.
- ⁵⁹ Review of *The Gorilla*, *Variety*, May 18 1939.
- ⁶⁰ Review of *The Man They Could Not Hang*, *Motion Picture Herald*, September ?, 1939.
- ⁶¹ Review of *Hound of the Baskervilles*, *Variety*, March 29 1939.
- ⁶² Review of *Hunchback of Notre Dame*, *Variety*, December 14, 1939.
- ⁶³ Balio, *Grand Design*, p. 310.
- ⁶⁴ Review of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, *Variety*, July 23, 1941. This review also praises the performances of Tracy, Bergman and Turner, but interestingly does not mention the film's horror angles at all.
- ⁶⁵ Report on *Phantom of the Opera*, *New York Times*, February 21, 1943.
- ⁶⁶ Review of *Phantom of the Opera*, *Western Family*, October 7, 1943.

- ⁶⁷ Review of *Phantom of the Opera*, *Harrison's Reports*, August 21, 1943.
- ⁶⁸ Review of *Phantom of the Opera*, *Hollywood Reporter*, August 13, 1943.
- ⁶⁹ Review of *Phantom of the Opera*, *Hollywood Reporter*, August 13, 1943.
- ⁷⁰ Review of *Phantom of the Opera*, *Look*, October 5, 1943.
- ⁷¹ Report on *Phantom of the Opera*, *New Yorker*, October 16, 1943.
- ⁷² Richard G. Hubler, "Scare 'Em to Death – and Cash In", *Saturday Evening Post*, May 23 1942. Quoted in Bansak, *Fearing the Dark*, p. 142.
- ⁷³ Box office report from *Variety*, Oct 12, 1938, p. 11. Letter from Vandervoort to Breen, November 18 1938, PCA case file for *Dracula*.
- ⁷⁴ Skal, *The Monster Show*, p. 218.
- ⁷⁵ *Los Angeles Times* interview, undated, quoted in Siegel, *The Reality of Terror*, p. 30.

Filmography

All Quiet on the Western Front (Universal, 1930, dir. Lewis Milestone)
Almost Married (Fox, 1932, dir. William Cameron Menzies)
American Werewolf in London (PolyGram, 1981, dir. John Landis)
Applause (1930, dir. Rouben Mamoulian)
Baby Face (Warner, 1933, dir. Alfred E. Green)
The Bat (United Artists, 1926, dir. Roland West)
Bedlam (RKO, 1946, dir. Mark Robson)
Before I Hang (Columbia, 1940, dir. Nick Grinde)
The Blackbird (MGM, 1926, dir. Tod Browning)
The Black Cat (Universal, 1934, dir. Edgar G. Ulmer)
The Black Cat (Universal, 1941, dir. Albert S. Rogell)
Black Moon (Columbia, 1934, dir. Roy William Neill)
The Black Room (Columbia, 1934, dir. Roy William Neill)
A Blind Bargain (Goldwyn, 1922, dir. Wallace Worsley)
The Body Snatcher (RKO, 1945, dir. Robert Wise)
Bride of Frankenstein (Universal, 1935, dir. James Whale)
Carrie (United Artists, 1976, dir. Brian de Palma)
The Cat and the Canary (Paramount, 1939, dir. Elliott Nugent)
Cat People (RKO, 1942, dir. Jacques Tourneur)
The Crime of Dr. Crespi (John H. Auer, 1935, dir. John H. Auer)
Condemned to Live (Invincible, 1935, dir. Frank R. Strayer)
Curse of the Cat People (RKO, 1944, dir. Robert Wise)
The Devil Doll (MGM, 1936, dir. Tod Browning)
Dark Eyes of London (Great Britain, 1939, dir. Walter Summers)
The Day After (ABC, 1983, dir. Nicholas Meyer)
Dracula (Universal, 1931, dir. Tod Browning)
Dracula's Daughter (Universal, 1936, dir. Lambert Hillyer)
Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (Universal, 1931, dir. Rouben Mamoulian)
Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (MGM, 1941, dir. Victor Fleming)
Doctor X (Warner, 1932, dir. Michael Curtiz)
Flesh and Blood (Cummings, 1922, dir. Irving Cummings)
Frankenstein (Universal, 1931, dir. James Whale)
Freaks (MGM, 1932, dir. Tod Browning).
The Ghost of Frankenstein (Universal, 1942, dir. Erle C. Kenton)
The Ghost Ship (RKO, 1943, dir. Mark Robson)

The Ghoul (Gaumont British, 1933, dir. T. Hayes Hunter)
Grand Hotel (MGM, 1932, dir. Edmund Goulding)
He Who Gets Slapped (MGM, 1924, dir. Victor Sjöström)
Hold That Ghost (Universal, 1941, dir. Arthur Lubin)
Hound of the Baskervilles (Universal, 1939, dir. Sidney Lanfield)
The Hunchback of Notre Dame (Universal, 1923, dir. Wallace Worsley)
The Hunchback of Notre Dame (RKO, 1939, dir. William Dieterle)
The Invisible Man (Universal, 1933, dir. James Whale)
The Invisible Man Returns (Universal, 1940, dir. Joe May)
The Invisible Ray (Universal, 1936, dir. Edmund Grainger)
I Am a Fugitive From a Chain Gang (Warner, 1932, dir. Mervyn LeRoy)
Island of Lost Souls (Paramount, 1932, dir. Erle C. Kenton)
Isle of the Dead (RKO, 1945, dir. Mark Robson)
I Walked With a Zombie (RKO, 1943, dir. Jacques Tourneur)
Jane Eyre (Fox, 1943, dir. Robert Stevenson)
The Jazz Singer (Warner, 1927, dir. Alan Crosland)
Das Kabinett des Doktor Caligari [*The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*] (Germany, 1919, dir. Robert Wiene)
King Kong (RKO, 1933, dir. Merian C. Cooper and Ernest B. Schoedsack)
Laugh, Clown, Laugh (MGM, Herbert Brenon, 1928)
The Leopard Man (RKO, 1943, dir. Jacques Tourneur)
London After Midnight (MGM, 1927, dir. Tod Browning)
The Lost World (First National, 1925, dir. Harry O' Hoyt)
The Mad Genius (Warner, 1931, dir. Michael Curtiz)
Mad Love (MGM, 1935, dir. Karl Freund)
Man Made Monster (Universal, 1941, dir. George Waggner)
The Man They Could Not Hang (Columbia, 1939, dir. Nick Grinde)
The Man Who Laughs (Universal, 1928, dir. Paul Leni)
The Man Who Reclaimed His Head (Universal, 1934, dir. Edward Ludwig)
Mark of the Vampire (MGM, 1934, dir. Tod Browning),
The Mask of Fu Manchu (MGM, 1932, dir. Charles Vidor)
The Monkey's Paw (RKO, 1933, dir. Wesley Ruggles, Ernest Schoedsack)
The Monster Walks (Action, 1932, dir. Frank Strayer)
The Most Dangerous Game (RKO, 1932, dir. Ernest Schoedsack, Irving Pichel)
Mr. Wu (MGM, 1927, dir. William Nigh)
The Mummy's Hand (Universal, 1940, dir. Christy Cabanne)
Murders in the Zoo (Fox, 1933, dir. A. Edward Sutherland)

Murders in the Rue Morgue (Universal, 1932, dir. Robert Florey)
Mystery of the Wax Museum (Warner, 1933, dir. Michael Curtiz)
Nosferatu eine Symphonie des Grauens [*Nosferatu: a Symphony of Fear*] (Germany, 1922, dir. F.W. Murnau)
The Old Dark House (Universal, 1932, dir. James Whale)
Outside the Law (Universal, 1920, dir. Tod Browning)
The Penalty (MGM, 1920, dir. Wallace Worsley)
Phantom of the Opera (Universal, 1925, dir. Rupert Julian)
The Phantom of the Opera (Universal, 1943, dir. Arthur Lubin)
The Raven (Universal, 1935, dir. Lew Landers),
Rebecca (Selznick-International, 1940, dir. Alfred Hitchcock)
Red-Headed Woman (MGM, 1932, dir. Jack Conway)
The Return of Doctor X (Warner, 1939, dir. Vincent Sherman)
Revolt of the Zombies (United Artists, 1936, dir. Victor Halperin)
The Road to Mandalay (MGM, 1926, dir. Tod Browning)
The Seventh Victim (RKO, 1943, dir. Mark Robson)
Shadows (B. P. Schulberg, 1922, dir. Tom Forman)
The Shock (Universal, 1923, dir. Lambert Hillyer)
Son of Frankenstein (Universal, 1939, dir. Rowland V. Lee)
Son of Kong (RKO, 1933, Ernest Schoedsack)
The Story of Louis Pasteur (Warner, 1935, dir. William Dieterle)
Supernatural (Paramount, 1933, dir. Victor Halperin)
Svengali (Warner, 1931, dir. Archie Mayo)
Tell It to the Marines (MGM, 1927, dir. George W. Hill)
Topper (MGM, 1937, dir. Norman Z. McLeod)
Tower of London (Universal, 1939, dir. Rowland V. Lee)
The Unknown (MGM, 1927, dir. Tod Browning)
Universal Horror (UK, 1998, dir. Kevin Brownlow)
The Walking Dead (Warner, 1936, dir. Michael Curtiz)
Werewolf of London (Universal, 1935, dir. Stuart Walker)
West of Zanzibar (MGM, 1928, dir. Tod Browning)
Where East is East (MGM, 1929, dir. Tod Browning)
While the City Sleeps (MGM, 1928, dir. Jack Conway)
White Zombie (United Artists, 1932, dir. Victor Halperin)
The Wolf Man (Universal, 1941, dir. George Waggner)

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